

Oman welcomes Australian stand on West Jerusalem

The Foreign Ministry of the Sultanate of Oman said in a statement that the declaration by the Australian government revoking its recognition of West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, backs international efforts calling for the importance of committing to the international law and the resolutions of the United Nation concerning the Palestinian cause. — ONA



P10

BRAZIL EARN TAG OF FAVOURITES



P13

SALALAH MILLS GETS RO 10M LOAN TO FINANCE INDUSTRIAL BAKERY IN KHAZAEN



P20

STUDENT INVENTS WHEELCHAIR CONTROLLED BY BRAIN



MUSCAT

INCENTIVES IN GREEN HYDROGEN SECTOR

The Ministry of Energy and Minerals will hold a press conference on Sunday to announce opportunities and incentives for investment in the green hydrogen sector, as well as the official launch of Oman Hydrogen Company. The conference will outline Royal directives for the Sultanate of Oman's achieving zero carbon emissions by 2050. It will also include the establishment of the Oman Sustainability Centre, to keep pace with global action towards reducing carbon emissions. **DETAILS ON P13**

HM issues Royal Decree

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Wednesday issued Royal Decree No 66/2022 on the issuance of First-Class License to Oman Technology Infrastructure Company for the construction and operation of inactive infrastructure for telecom towers.

Article (1) states that a First-Class License shall be issued in favour of Oman Technology Infrastructure Company for the construction and operation of inactive infrastructure for telecom towers.

Article (2) says that this Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced on its date of issue. — ONA

LONDON

BRITISH INTERIOR MINISTER QUILTS

Britain's Suella Braverman quit as interior minister on Wednesday, saying she had to go after she breached government rules but that she had concerns over the direction of Prime Minister Liz Truss's government. The second senior minister to leave the government in less than a week, Braverman's departure heaps yet more pressure on Truss as she fights to stay in power just over six weeks after she entered Downing Street. "I have made a mistake, I accept responsibility; I resign," Braverman said in letter to Truss posted on Twitter.

HM RECEIVES MESSAGE FROM MALDIVES PRESIDENT



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received a written message from President Ibrahim Mohammed Saleh of the Republic of Maldives. The message deals with bilateral relations and means of promoting them in various spheres. It was handed over to Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy when he received at his office on Wednesday Envoy of the President of Maldives Abdullah Shahid, Minister of Foreign Affairs. The meeting underlined the cooperation in all fields between the two countries. It also discussed the regional and international developments. The meeting was attended by Khalid bin Hashil al Muselhi, Head of the Minister's Office Department, Mohammed Khalil, non-resident Ambassador of Maldives to the Sultanate of Oman, and officials from both sides. — ONA

Women equal partners in nation's development

WOMEN'S SPORTS CLUB IDENTITY LAUNCHED



HH Sayyid Theyazin touring an exhibition on the occasion. — ONA

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, presided over a ceremony organised by Women's Club for Sports and Cultural Creativity to mark Omani Women's Day. He also inducted the club's identity.

"Omani women proved their efficiency in many areas and acted as basic partners in the country's march of prosperity over the past years of the renaissance as desired by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik," said HH Sayyid Theyazin in a statement. He noted that His Majesty the Sultan affirmed that "citizen's partnership in building Oman's present and future constitutes a

basic pillar of national action".

HH Sayyid Theyazin added that the inauguration of the Women's Club for Sports and Cultural Creativity is a clear indication of the Royal care and attention accorded to women by His Majesty the Sultan. The event signals a renewed call for women to efficiently play their role alongside men and to keep pace with the requirements of this era, while at the same time taking pride in their identity and their ability to innovate and excel wherever they might be.

At the outset of the ceremony, HH Sayyid Theyazin toured an exhibition marking the occasion. He took note of samples of Omani

women's accomplishments in various fields of sports, culture and youth.

Meanwhile, Sayyidah Sana bint Hamad al Busaidiyah, President of the Club, said that Omani women have enjoyed lofty status since the dawn of the blessed Renaissance. This attention, she added, enabled women to shine as partners to domestic development. The designation of "Omani Women's Day" is yet another manifestation and celebration of women's role and a reaffirmation of their high prestige, said Sayyidah Sana.

The club is considered the first women's institution of its kind aimed to enhance women's contribution. **TURN TO P2**

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INSIDE



LULA'S LEAD OVER BOLSONARO NARROWS

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I'M A FIGHTER NOT A QUITTER, SAYS TRUSS

P9

Tenders for RO 111 million projects

MUSCAT: The Tender Board awarded tenders worth RO 111,303, 924 for new development projects and additional works at existing projects, at its fifth meeting held under the chairmanship of Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, Chairman of the Tender Board, on Wednesday. The projects include supply of medicines and vaccines for the Ministry of Health, establishment of the Central Public Health Laboratory, construction of Harweeb-Mateen road in Dhofar Governorate. The Tender Board also approved tenders for the construction of Mihilah-Ghbrat al Tam-Ismailiyah road in the Wilayat of Dima Wa'ttayeem in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate, replacement of old ACs at public schools and the remaining work of the seventh package of Al Batinah Expressway. — ONA

ROP SHOOTING CHAMPIONSHIP



The Royal Oman Police (ROP) Shooting Championship 2022 concluded on Wednesday under the auspices of Lt Gen Hasan bin Mohsin al Shraiqi, Inspector General of Police and Customs. The Special Tasks Police Team won the Royal Oman Police Shooting Championship, as well as the shield of the Women's Police Championship.

‘Something is fishy’ on universe’s expansion

PARIS: The most precise measurements ever made of the universe's composition and how fast it is expanding suggest "something is fishy" in our understanding of the cosmos, the astrophysicist who led the research said on Wednesday.

The comprehensive new study published in The Astrophysical Journal further confirmed that there is a significant discrepancy between two different ways to estimate the speed at which the universe is expanding.

The study said that around five per cent of the universe is made up of what we might think of as normal matter, while the rest is dark matter and dark energy — both of which remain shrouded in mystery.

Dark energy, a hypothetical



force causing the universe to expand at an ever-increasing rate, makes up 66.2 per cent of the cosmos, according to the study published in The Astrophysical Journal. The remaining 33.8 per cent is a combination of matter and dark matter, which is also unknown but may consist of some as-yet-undiscovered subatomic particle. — AFP



Winter tourism season gets underway in Dhofar



SALALAH: European tourist groups began arriving in Dhofar Governorate as the winter tourism season got underway. The first cohort of European tourists from the Czech Republic and Slovakia arrived in Salalah Airport within the framework of a strategy drawn up by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and aimed at promoting Dhofar Governorate as an all-year-round tourist destination. Marwan bin Abdulhakim al Ghassani, Director of the

Department of Tourism Promotion at the Directorate-General of Heritage and Tourism in Dhofar, said that the ministry, in cooperation with its partners in the tourism sector, activated plans for attracting more charter flights and cruise ships from European countries. He stressed the importance of the efforts made by the ministry in cooperation with tourism partners to do whatever necessary to make the tourist season a success. The Ministry of Heritage and

Tourism, in conjunction with the winter tourism season, will, over the upcoming period, carry out multiple tourism events and programmes for both local and international tourism. The most notable among these being the frankincense season scheduled for late November and the Empty Quarter Festival in the Niyabat of Al Shasr in the Wilayat of Thamrait, the official said. AL Ghassani added that Dhofar Governorate possesses huge tourism potentials and attractions that enable it to become a preferred tourist destination for tourists from the world, particularly European tourists. Dhofar has moderate weather throughout the year and environmental and terrain diversity, in addition to sandy beaches, mountains, valleys, deserts, caves and bays rich in aquatic life that attract divers. The winter tourism season in Dhofar Governorate constitutes an essential element for the local economy and has a positive direct and indirect impact on the tourism industry be it through the growth of scheduled or charter flights to Salalah Airport as well as the increase in cruise ship traffic at the Port of Salalah, he said. — ONA

TENDERS OVER RO 111 MILLION GET CLEARANCE



The Tender Board awarded tenders worth RO 111,303, 924 for new development projects and additional works at existing projects, at its fifth meeting held under the chairmanship of Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, Chairman of the Tender Board, on Wednesday.

Women equal partners in development

FROM PAGE 1

She added that the club would empower women to carry out social roles more competently and confidently, she added. Later, HH Sayyid Theyazin launched the club's identity, indicating the design of an index finger ring - being a symbol of leadership and a reflection of the new club's values of confidence, progress and social traditions. The identity also underscores the role played by women in the country's development, gaining inspiration from their history and their own vision to build the future. A Women's Symposium for Sports and Cultural Creativity is being held to mark the occasion. Besides highlighting women's specialisations and goals, the symposium sheds light on the accomplishments that gave rise to women's presence in sports and cultural arenas. The two-day symposium will have two sessions, the first deals with the stage of establishment of the club. The second reviews women's sports and cultural activities at GCC and Arab levels. It highlights the experiences of similar clubs in Kuwait and Morocco. The symposium will continue on Thursday with two sessions. The first session will deal with "joint work and integration of roles" and the second will focus on the development of sports and cultural action. It also contemplates women's presence in the cultural sector. — ONA

'Climate change poses risks to financial system'



VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Central Bank of Oman has warned that risks associated with climate change pose challenges to the country's financial stability. Climate change risks present severe concerns to the financial system posing micro and macro prudential risks. "There is a growing awareness and concerns about the implications of climate change on financial stability as it poses two major types of risks, the first is its direct physical impact leading to infrastructure and property damages, and the second is the transition risks such as changes in climate policy, technology, and consumer and market sentiment," the latest financial stability report said. Hydrocarbon-dependent countries like the Sultanate of Oman are exposed to an additional challenge from the drive to reduce their carbon footprint. A large part of the Sultanate of Oman's GDP relies on the production and export of hydrocarbons, which are a major source of greenhouse gases. "Therefore, besides the climate risks faced by all other countries, phasing out carbon emissions

would require massive changes in the structure of the economy. Assessment of climate risks remains a challenge because of the difficult-to-predict shocks and significant long-time horizon spanning over decades for modelling and analysis of transition risks. Nevertheless, CBO continues to keep a close eye on the climate change risks and strives to expand its capability to formally incorporate these risks in its assessment of financial stability. Speaking to the Observer, Wael Makarem, market strategist at a regional trading platform, said, "Over the longer term and to minimise exposure to future economic shocks, Oman could work on gradually reducing its dependence on oil and natural gas exports to limit risks that could derive from slowing demand and diversify towards other industries and opportunities." The Sultanate of Oman is working on a comprehensive national strategy and an operational plan for zero neutrality, in line with development objectives in various sectors that support balanced and resilient ecosystems to protect the environment and the sustainability of its natural resources.

Training camp for teachers to foster thinking skills

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 19

The Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the Arab Centre for Educational Training for the Gulf States, began a four-day training camp to develop thinking skills under the auspices of Dr Ali bin Qassim al Lawati, Chairman of the Royal Academy of Administration. Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambosaidi, Under-Secretary for Education; Dr Moza bint Nasser al Kaabi, Director of the Arab Centre for Educational Training for the Gulf States, and officials were present. The training camp targets a number of supervisors, new

teachers, school principals and educators from Oman, other GCC states and Yemen are taking part in the camp. The opening of the training camp began with a speech by Dr Al Kaabi, in which she said: "Through the training camp, the idea is to impart training for educators to foster critical decision-making, critical thinking, problem-solving, innovative thinking and metacognitive thinking among students. This enables students today to face the burdens and problems of life and enhance their abilities to make appropriate decisions in their lives." Dr Sulaiman bin Abdullah

al Jamoudi, Director-General of the Ministry of Education, said: "Thinking skills are of great importance as they help students to solve problems. This training camp covers a number of topics that include foundations and methods of developing thinking skills, future thinking skills in the educational system, integrating thinking skills in school curricula and applying augmented reality technology in developing thinking. During the camp, the participants will visit Al Ula School for Basic Education in Muscat, Sultan Qaboos University, and the Military Technical College.

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Oman participates in Frankfurt Book Fair

FRANKFURT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, and the Ministry of Information, is participating in the 74th edition of Frankfurt International Book Fair 2022 in Germany. The fair kicked off on Wednesday and will continue until October 23.

Oman has always been keen to take part in the fair, as it is one of the largest annual cultural extravaganzas at the European and global level.

Oman's participation at the fair aims to highlight the intellectual, civilisational and cultural heritage in the country.

In view of the significance of this fair at the global level, various Omani publications have been prepared in German, Arabic, French and English languages featuring historical, literary, scientific, media and tourism fields.

A collection of publications also shed light on social aspects, wildlife and the environment. Other publications also spotlight historical sites and adventure tourism in Oman. These publications display the diversity and richness of Omani life features.

The Omani pavilion displays videos showcasing major development and civilised achievements. It also highlights tourism and unique environmental components of Oman.

The Omani pavilion at the fair annually witnesses a large turnout of intellectuals, professionals and students.

More than 4,000 publishing houses representing 65 countries from around the world are taking part in the fair. The Kingdom of Spain is the guest of honour at the event this year. — OMA

Maritime History Museum to be a world class destination

VINOD NAIR

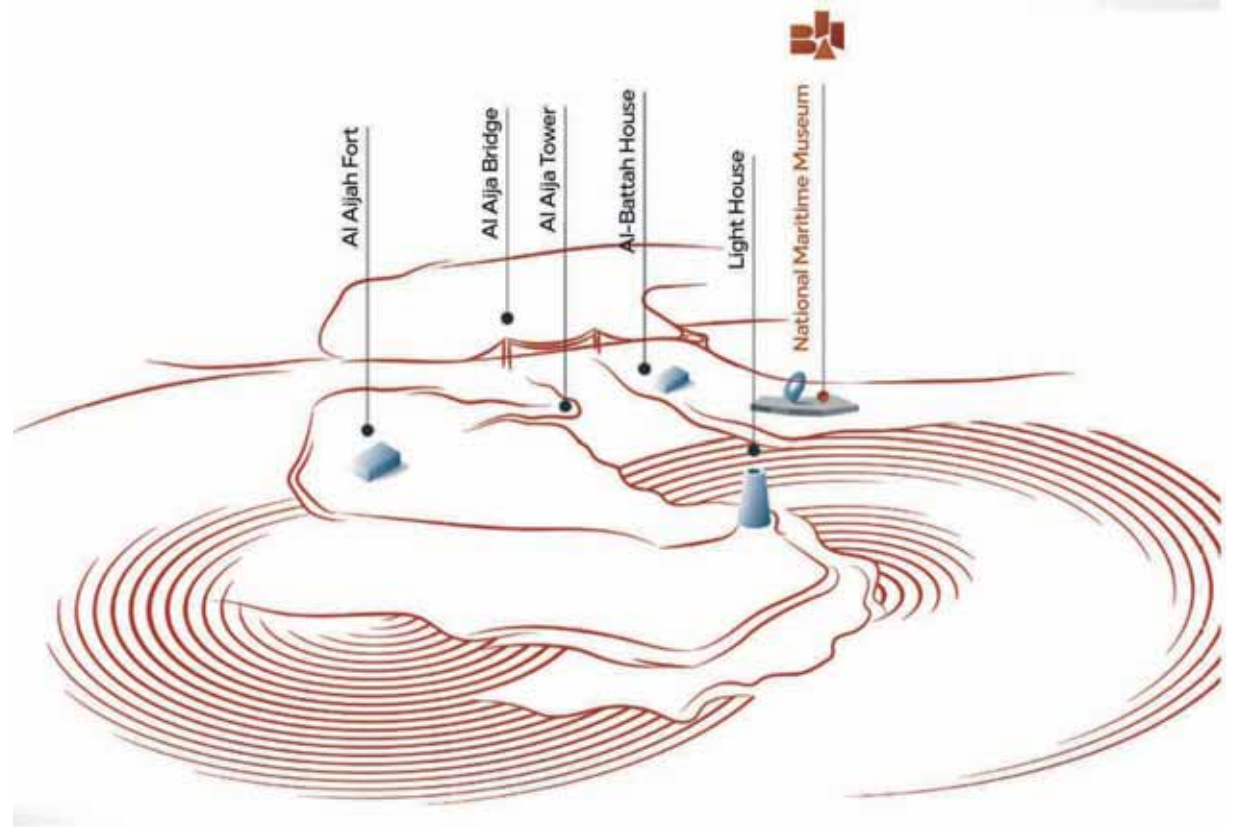
@vinot_nair

The second edition of the Bilarab bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design has been launched to pick the best design for the Maritime History Museum (MHM) in Sur, which will be set up by Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

As per the recently-released guide, the museum will be a cultural and educational national centre that will house, preserve and showcase the sea-faring Omani heritage.

Designers are expected to propose plans that reflect their understanding and ability to design and present a museum building that considers the latest developments and best practices in maritime museums from around the world in terms of architecture and the methods of exhibiting museum content. "The purpose of this architecture design competition is to select the optimal design for the establishment of the "Oman Maritime History Museum" with aims to educate and inform the Omani youth and visitors in general about the rich heritage of the maritime history of Oman."

The last date for receiving applications is December 1 and 30 projects will be shortlisted on December 20.



The second shortlist of 10 best projects will be on January 3, 2023.

They will present their projects to the jury on January 16, 17, and 18.

The first three winners will be announced at the closing ceremony in February.

The museum will be located on Sur Beach in a site area of 14,154 m2. The built-up area will be not more than 8,500 m2 inclusive of circulation. The building-to-land ratio will be not less than 50 per cent, and the museum will be not

less than two floors.

The age of the participant should not be more than 35 years, including job-seekers and students who are passionate about the topic of the competition.

The Omani youth who meet the conditions of participation can participate individually, or a group of young people can participate as a (team) with no more than three members so that the participants can collectively submit their proposal bearing the names of the team members while adhering to

the same conditions stipulated in the competition.

Each team must include at least one architect or architectural engineer.

The site has many challenges including possible traffic build-up on the corniche and the risks of flooding.

Participants are advised to take into consideration these issues when developing their design and clearly show how they propose protection measures to mitigate these climatic risks to the MHM.



Ma7al'ha boost for small businesses owned by women

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

@lakshmioman

Amid celebrations throwing the spotlight on the achievements of Omani women, a social initiative named Ma7al'ha has been launched.

In celebration of Omani Women's Day 2022, Lahunna Oman joined hands with City Centre Muscat to launch Ma7al'ha, a social initiative to honour and celebrate Omani women running small businesses.

Out of 100 applicants, 13 were selected to showcase their products for seven days at City Centre Muscat.

Shatha al Maskiry, Founder of Lahunna Oman, said, "We are giving businesswomen a chance to shine and succeed. This collaboration with City Centre Muscat gives them greater

exposure to grow their customer base and allows them to play in the big leagues and aspire to become the super brands of tomorrow."

Inspired by Lahunna Oman, Ma7al'ha, which directly translates to "her place" in English, is a play-on-word, meaning, 'her shop', 'her place' in the business community and society as a whole. The logo illustrates limitless opportunities surrounding women.

Speaking to the *Observer*, Shatha said, "This isn't something new. Over 70 per cent of the SMEs registered in the last decade were registered by Omani women. This is clearly visible with the growing number of shops in the retail sector - home decor, garments, perfumery, jewellery, food and beverage, to name a few."

According to her, the pandemic

has had a positive impact in this aspect.

"A huge influx of new small companies surfaced during the pandemic (especially on Instagram) which suggests that Omani women are economic contributors to the household. There could not have been a better time to celebrate them than now and to make them more visible to help them grow and thrive. Their growth directly contributes to the growth of our economy."

Small companies, however, do have their challenges, but this is how Shatha views it, "Several initiatives have been introduced recently to curb some of the challenges, and I believe other challenges are being carefully studied to devise solutions which will encourage more SMEs to enter the market."

Search continues for missing woman

KABEER YOUSUF

@kabeeryousef

Search is continuing to locate the Omani woman who went missing from Izki on October 3, according to the Royal Oman Police.

Hamida bint Hammoud al Amriyah, aged 57, who went out to the local Quran memorisation school, did not return home. She was reported missing by her family members the same day.

Combing operations by the Search and Rescue teams of the

Civil Defence and Ambulances Authority (CDAA), using sniffer dogs, could not locate her till the report went to print.

"People in and around the wilayat are still on the lookout for her and social media is abuzz with the request to find her. We have made videos in many Asian languages as well in the hope that she can be found safe soon," said Sulayem al Nabhani, one of her neighbours.

The video languages included English, Arabic, Urdu, and Bangla,

aimed at all expatriates to help locate her.

The ROP posted the missing person's details on all social media handles while the civilians actively participated with the authorities by posting videos and posters across all platforms.

The CDAA updated that the search was continuing for the missing woman and appealed to the members of the society to alert ROP operations number 9999 or 1444 in case she is spotted anywhere.

230 women sign up for Misk

KABEER YOUSUF

@kabeeryousef

As many as 230 women have enrolled for the Misk programme under the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs across the country, according to a top official.

Speaking to the *Observer*, Jokha bint Ali al Harthi, Assistant Director-General for women's education and counselling affairs, said the initiative, which began with three branches in 2019, has been widely sought after by Omani women.

"The idea behind the Misk programme is to highlight the significance of preserving and adhering to the local Omani identity and national responsibility centred around Islamic values of tolerance and authentic Omani traditions for the achievement of Oman 2040 vision," she said.

She further said that the idea behind the programme is to popularise skills of recitation



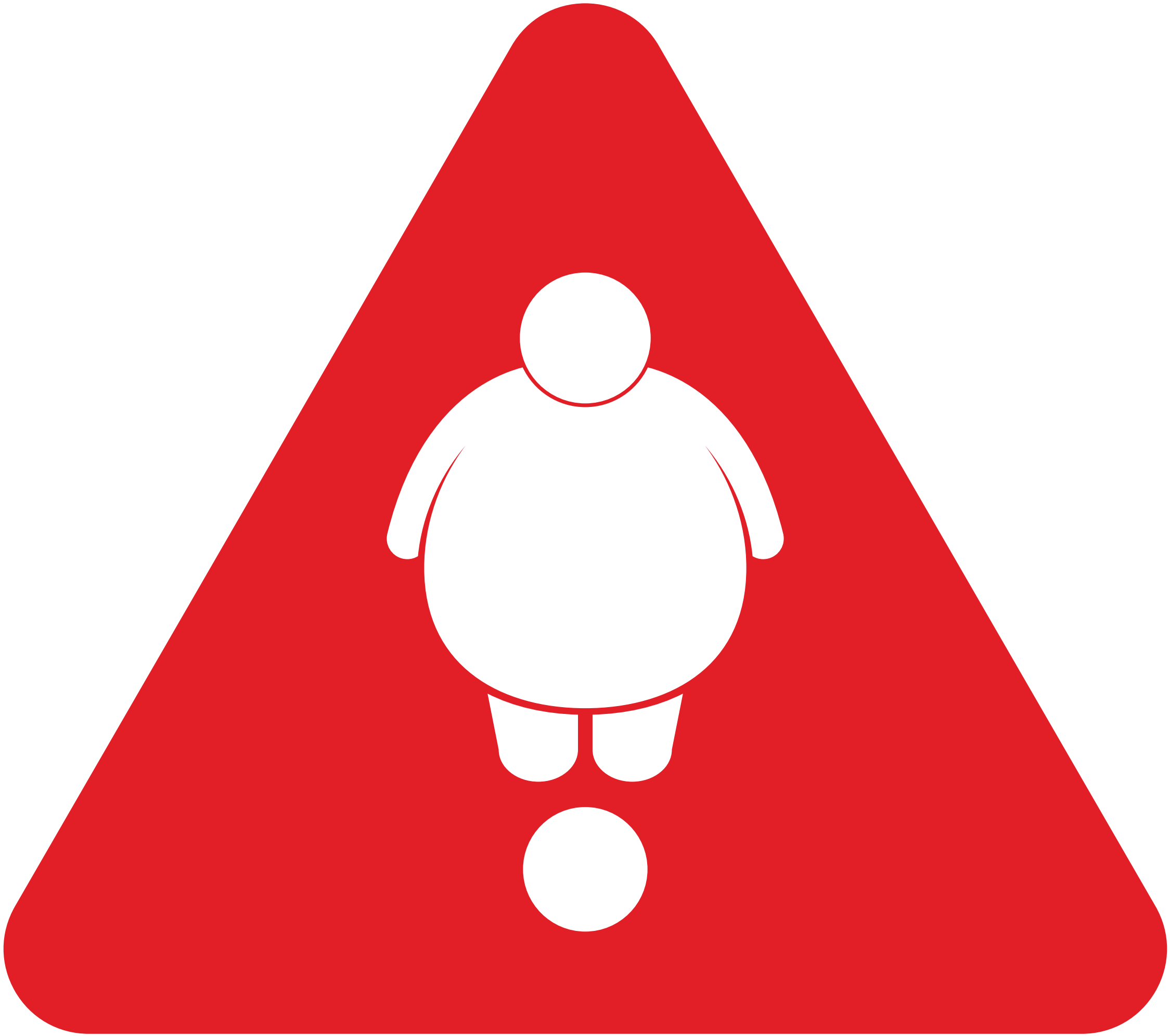
of Holy Quran, memorisation, Tafseer (the science of explanation of the Quran) and Tajweed (set of rules for the correct pronunciation of the letters with all their qualities and application) among women.

As many as 16 women graduated as Hafidha (one who has completely memorised the Holy Quran) while 42 students are halfway through. First place holders from all branches in the first competition of the Misk programme were recently honoured.

"We, at the Ministry, have

introduced a revised version of the Misk programme to prepare generations of young girls to help them memorise the Holy Quran with perfection and precise Tajweed. Moreover, we aim to nurture and educate young women as carriers of the Noble Quran in words and deeds for the sake of the Almighty," Jokha, who is also the chairperson of the organising committee, said.

The mission is to reach out to large segments of girls for helping them memorise the Quran over 2 to 5 years.



PAY A HEAVY PRICE IF YOU STAY IDLE

HEART DISEASE, OBESITY, DIABETES WILL COST \$27 BILLION ANNUALLY IF GOVERNMENTS DON’T TAKE URGENT ACTION TO ENCOURAGE MORE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AMONG THEIR POPULATIONS, WARNS WHO

KABEER YOUSUF
[@kabeeryousef](#)

The price of avoiding physical activities is very high. Movement burns calories and rejuvenates the human body, while being idle makes it weak and infirm.

The first global report prepared by the World Health Organization (WHO) suggests that between 2020 and 2030, almost 500 million people around the world will develop innumerable non-communicable diseases (NCDs), including heart disease, obesity and diabetes which will cost \$27 billion annually if governments don’t take urgent action to encourage more physical activity among their populations.

In the Sultanate of Oman, more than half of the population are either overweight or obese, with 30 per cent of the people, mostly women, having a BMI of more than 30, according to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Health (MoH). This figure shows a rise in the cases of obesity in Oman when compared to the last survey in 2008. However, some of the GCC

countries are far ahead of the Sultanate of Oman in global statistics. WHO report points at countries to initiate and implement policies to increase physical activity levels and thereby prevent disease and reduce the burden on already overwhelmed healthcare systems as less than 50 per cent of countries have a national physical activity policy, of which less than 40 per cent are operational.

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, said, “We need more countries to scale up implementation of policies to support people to be more active through walking, cycling, sport, and other physical activity. The benefits are huge, not only for the physical and mental health of individuals, but also for societies, environments and economies.”

According to the MoH, the causes of obesity in Oman are complex, but one of the key drivers is the way we eat and how much we move, which is changing dramatically.

“As a result of changes in our environment, unhealthy processed food and the technology that promotes sedentary lifestyles have

become more readily available. Unfortunately, convenience has led us to adopt an unhealthy lifestyle, which in turn has led to obesity,” MoH report said.

Oman hosted the World Obesity Regional Conference on Women and Child First in 2019 and the Gulf Obesity Surgical Society’s sixth annual obesity conference underlining its commitment to eradicating obesity and nurturing a healthy community in the country.

To help countries increase physical activity, WHO’s Global action plan on physical activity 2018-2030 (GAPPA) sets out 20 policy recommendations to all countries and calls for accelerated action by all relevant stakeholders working better together to achieve the global target of a 15-per cent reduction in the prevalence of physical inactivity by 2030.

These policies include the provision of safer roads to encourage more active transport, providing more programmes and opportunities for physical activity in key settings, such as childcare and schools to catch them young, primary healthcare and the workplace for adults.



Nearly 300,000 kids visited science fest

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The Third edition of Oman Science Festival saw an impressive attendance of children from various public and private schools across the country.

According to the Ministry of Education (MoE), about 300,000 children visited the six-day event from October 10 to 15 under the slogan "Together we live the passion for science".

The annual knowledge festival was marked by the overwhelming participation of young students, science and technology companies, government and military bodies and authorities,

the private sector, and the Ministry of Education.

The participation of the various national institutions in the OSF, which targeted children to instil some values by implementing several scientific competitions in a fun and attractive way, got general appreciation.

Over 400 activities happened across kiosks during the OSF, while young Omani children displayed many other innovative ideas.

"We have achieved the desired goals, and children are inspired and motivated. We are pretty sure most of them would pursue science as a major for higher studies," Dr Khamis bin Abdullah



Ambosaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education, Chairman of the Main

Committee of Oman Science Festival, said in his closing remarks.

"There are some brilliant ideas from the children which can be further developed and patented. For example, the rainwater system and local laptop manufacturing plant," Fatma al Azri, one of the participants, told the Observer.

All the events had unique goals and inspired students like me. It was an amazing experience for me. I could learn a lot about science, technology, health, education, trade, economy, food, environment, AI, energy, climate change and universe. The entire fair surprised me a lot and it was a huge inspiration for me," said Sadhika Vikas, a student of Indian School Al Maabala.

MoE marks International Day of Statistics

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 19

The Ministry of Education organised an event on the occasion of the International Day of Statistics, which falls on October 20 every year. The meeting was held in the presence of Rahma al Mahrouqi, Director of the Department of Statistics and Information, heads of departments and their staff, at Suhar Hall in the Ministry's General Diwan on Wednesday.

The event included the presentation of five papers, the first was titled "Phone Application: Our Locations" presented by Ahmed al Amri, Head of Department of Geographic Systems at the Department of Statistics and Information. The second paper was titled "Role of Statistics in Geographic Information Systems" presented by Suleiman al Hashmi, Geographic Information Systems Specialist at the Department of Geographic Systems.

The third paper came on the topic of ArcGIS Enterprise programme and was presented by Hamad al Subhi, Second Specialist of Geographic Information Systems at the Department of Geographic Systems.

The fourth paper was titled "Phone Applications: Statistics and Indicators" presented by Hassan al Lawati, Senior Statistician at the Department of Statistics and Information. The fifth and final paper covered the topic of "POWERBI Programme" and was presented by Fatima al Mukhaini, Second Statistician at the Department of Educational Indicators.

Journalists Association marks Omani Women's Day in Nizwa



AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, OCT 19

The Oman Journalists Association, represented by the Women Journalists Affairs Committee, organised a ceremony at Al Shahba Castle in Nizwa on Wednesday.

As part of the event, a dialogue session in cooperation with the Omani Women's Association in Nizwa was held on media and community development at the association's premises. It was held under the auspices of Shaikh Hamdan bin Nasser al Rumaiddi,

a member of the Majlis Ash'shura and representative of Nizwa.

The session began with a speech by Laila Awlad Thani. The dialogue session was moderated by the media person Souad bint Suroor al Balushi. The session was attended by Jokha bint Mohammed al Farsi, a volunteer in community service; Basma bint Matar Kamuna, Director of Content at the Ministry of Information; Dr Mahfuzah bint Rashid al Mushaifri, Assistant Professor at University of Nizwa; and Ghasiya bint Suleiman al

Amri, a community contributor from Birkat Al Mouz.

The ceremony continued in the evening at Al Shahba Castle in the Wilayat of Nizwa. It included several accompanying activities and events under the auspices of Dr Badriya bint Ibrahim al Shehhi, Vice-President of the State Council.

The ceremony included a speech by Zainab bint Khamis al Zadjali, head of the Journalists' Affairs Committee of the Oman Journalists Association.

Then a dialogue session

entitled 'Women's Media is a Renewed Renaissance' was held. The media person, Souad bint Suroor al Balushi moderated it. Dr Hanan bint Abdul Aziz al Kindi, media consultant; Zainab bint Abdullah al Zadjali, the first woman journalist in Dhofar; and Thoraya bint Mohammad al Jabri of the Ministry of Economy, participated in the session.

On the sidelines of the ceremony, an exhibition of handicrafts and Omani food was held.

In the coming days, a visit to

the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Nizwa will be organised to meet students and faculty. During this, the journalists will talk about their experiences.

A visit to the Al Bustan Inn will also be held to learn about the experiences and projects of young Omani people, including the tourist vehicles and hostel projects.

The Sultanate of Oman celebrates October 17 as Omani Women's Day to mark the achievements of Omani women in various fields.





Sultanate of Oman The Supreme Judicial Council

Tender Announcement

The Supreme Judicial Council announces its desire to submit the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Vendor Grade	Tender Document Fee
43/2022	Maintenance Works at Alkamel wa Al wafi Primary Court	26/10/2022	21/11/2022 at 10 AM	Fourth	RO 25/-

Where you can buy the tender documents electronically via the link below website :
(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

Bidders shall submit their bids electronically via the aforementioned website. An electronic bank guarantee certified by one of the banks operating in the country shall be delivered at a rate of (1%) of the bid value with each bid, valid for a period of (90) days from the date of submission of bids and addressed in the name of the Chairman of the Internal Committee of Tenders in The Supreme Judicial Council, based on directives from the General Secretariat of the Tender Board, and the latest updates to the electronic tender system.

1- For inquiries and clarifications on the tender:
Submit inquiries related to the project electronically through the website of the electronic tender system (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).

2- For inquiries and clarifications on the electronic bidding system:
Submit inquiries regarding technical support for the electronic bidding system via e-mail and the phone number shown below:
Phone: +968 24402200
Email: etenderhd@ita.gov.om



إعلان مزايمة Bidding Announcement

Investment Announcement No.1/2022 Extend investment bidding for Develop, Manage and Operate Dhalkut Port in Dhofar Governorate

Due to the increasing requests from investors to participate in the investment bidding, Internal investment committee at The Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology announces the following request to extend the investment bidding for local and global companies specialized in developing, managing, and operating ports to participate and submit their investment proposals for developing, managing, and operating Dhalkut Port in Dhofar Governorate in the Sultanate of Oman.

NUMBER	DOCUMENT PURCHASING DATE	CLARIFICATION PERIODS	CLOSING DATE	DOCUMENT FEES
1/2022	16/10/2022 – 06/11/2022	06/11/2022 – 20/11/2022	18/12/2022 12:00 PM	500 Omani Rials (non-refundable)

- Document fee should be paid by a transfer only to the Ministry's account number **0325001361300017 Bank Muscat**
- The payment receipt must be sent to investment@mtcit.gov.om
- Investment proposal must be valid for at least 12 months and should be signed and stamped
- The RFP document will be sent by E-mail only
- All investment proposals should be sent as PDF to investment@mtcit.gov.om
- For any other inquiries please contact us through the following numbers:

PHONE NUMBER	E-mail
24685066 24685094	investment@mtcit.gov.om

INTERNAL INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

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US, Korean troops stage river-crossing drills

YEOJU: South Korean and American troops practiced building floating bridges to ferry tanks and other armoured vehicles across rivers on Wednesday, part of a larger joint military exercise that has angered North Korea.

South Korean attack helicopters deployed flares and armoured vehicles blew white smoke screens into the air as main battle tanks, armoured personnel carriers, and other military vehicles crossed pontoon bridges over the Namhan River near Yeosu, south of Seoul.

The drill involved armoured “attacking” forces of the South Korean army’s 11th Mobile Division, which is participating in the 12-day Hoguk 22 field exercises, crossing bridges established by South Korean and US engineering units.

North Korea has condemned the drills for raising tensions and has test-fired rockets and artillery in response.

South Korea and the United States say the drills are defensive, and necessary for deterring the North.

About 1,000 South Korean and US troops participated on



South Korean and US soldiers take part in their joint river crossing operation drill in Yeosu, South Korea. – Reuters

Wednesday, with about 50 tanks and other armoured vehicles, KF-16 fighter jets, Apache and Cobra attack helicopters, and more than 140 pieces of engineering equipment such as floating bridge units, according to South Korea’s

defence ministry.

Nearby, residents water skied on the river and rode by on riverside bicycle paths.

The drills simulated a so-called wet gap crossing, military jargon for any obstacle filled with water,

such as a river, said Captain Sean Kasprisin, a company commander in the US Army’s 11th Engineer Battalion, calling it “tough and realistic training”.

In a war, such operations might be required if bridges were

South Korea and the United States say the drills are defensive, and necessary for deterring the North

knocked out by bombing, or if an army wanted to surprise its opponents by crossing away from established bridges or roads.

“Developing river-crossing capabilities is a key factor that can make or break wartime operations given the Korean peninsula’s geography with many rivers,” said Lieutenant Colonel Won Seong-hoon of the South Korean 7th Engineer Brigade.

South Korea uses an older version of US-made bridging equipment, and one span was assembled using elements from each side, allowing troops to practice combining the different systems.

“A lot of rivers can vary in how far across they are, so we don’t know where we need to deploy,” Kasprisin said. “So if that length is too far, then we need to be able to work together.” — Reuters

N Korea fires artillery into buffer area

SEOUL: South Korea on Wednesday criticised North Korea for unleashing a fresh artillery barrage into waters off its east and west coasts, targeting a maritime “buffer zone” set up in 2018 to reduce tensions.

Pyongyang has dramatically ramped up missile launches and military exercises in recent weeks, as Seoul and Washington say North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is close to conducting what would be his country’s seventh nuclear test.

Roughly 250 rounds were launched late on Tuesday, South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said, calling it a “clear violation” of the 2018 agreement. “We strongly urge North Korea to immediately halt its actions,” the JCS said in a statement. — AFP



Senior official of the Palestinian movement, Abdulaziz al Minawi, and Hamas Arab relations chief Khalil al Hayya (R) hold a press conference during a visit to Damascus. – AFP

Hamas leaders meet Assad in Damascus

DAMASCUS: Syria’s President Bashar al Assad met a delegation from Hamas on Wednesday, with the Palestinian faction saying the meeting could help “turn the page” after shunning Damascus for a decade.

Hamas leaders publicly endorsed the 2011 street uprising against Assad’s rule and vacated their Damascus headquarters in 2012.

Normalising ties with Assad could help restore Hamas’s inclusion in a so-called “axis of resistance”.

A small delegation visited Assad in Damascus on Wednesday “to turn all the pages of the past,” according to the head of delegation and Hamas politburo member Khalil Al Hayya.

“We consider it a historic meeting and a new start for joint Syrian-Palestinian action,” Hayya told a press conference. “We agreed with the president to move beyond the past.” He said several factors had encouraged the rapprochement now, including Israel’s development of ties with other Arab countries. “The Palestinian cause today needs an Arab supporter,” he said. — Reuters

Bomb blasts outside Myanmar prison kill eight, wound 18

NAYPYIDAW: Bombs inside parcels exploded at Myanmar’s biggest jail on Wednesday prompting soldiers to return fire in a confrontation in which at least eight people were killed, state media and a witness said.

An armed anti-junta group claimed responsibility for the attack at Insein Prison in a statement posted on social media, saying it was “retaliation against (junta chief) Min Aung Hlaing”.

“Today...the Special Task Agency of Burma (STA) carried out two attacks to execute the prison head. We’re retaliating against Min Aung Hlaing and...the prison officers for continuously oppressing our revolution comrades,” it said.

State-owned MRTV said the explosions were caused by “mines inside parcels” that killed three prison officers and five visitors and wounded 18 people. A wounded witness said gunfire also broke out after the bombs exploded at the parcel counter.

Myanmar has been in chaos since the military overthrew an



An entrance of Insein prison in Yangon. – AFP File

elected government led by Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi’s party, and launched a brutal crackdown on dissent. The witness said soldiers at the prison had opened fire in response to the blasts.

“As soon as I heard the blast, I ran out and that’s when I got hurt. The soldiers... at the entrance

gate fired shots recklessly,” said the witness, who declined to be named because of security reasons.

The witness said they were about 10 feet from the blasts and were not hurt by the explosions but from shrapnel from the gunfire. The seriously injured were evacuated from the prison, while others were

treated at nearby shops. A number of cases scheduled to be heard in the court next door were cancelled, according to media.

Insein is the country’s most notorious prison and thousands of political prisoners have been sent there since last year’s coup.

—Reuters

CAIRO

Saudi Arabia launches National Industrial Strategy

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman launched the National Industrial Strategy, which aims to increase the industrial exports value to 557 billion riyals by 2030, the country’s state news agency, SPA, reported.

The strategy is a plan to promote industry and attract investment in the kingdom’s economy, leading to economic diversification and growth of non-oil exports and GDP.

The strategy will also increase the total additional investments



in the sector to 1.3 trillion riyals, the agency added. “The kingdom will become a leading industrial powerhouse,” the agency quoted Prince Mohammed as saying.

— Reuters

NEW DELHI

India’s Congress elects first non-Gandhi chief

India’s opposition Congress party declared veteran leader Mallikarjun Kharge its new chief, the first person from outside the influential Nehru-Gandhi family to hold the beleaguered party’s presidency in 24 years.

Kharge, an 80-year-old from the lowest rung of the Congress, hopes to revive its flagging fortunes with a new leader after losing two general elections and control of some state assemblies to BJP. “The most important issues facing the country right



now is inflation, unemployment, a widening divide between the rich and poor and an environment of hatred spread by the ruling government,” Kharge told reporters. — Reuters

TUNIS

Tunisian bakers strike over unpaid subsidies

Thousands of Tunisian bakers began an open-ended strike to demand fees the state owes them for producing subsidised bread as the country faces a grave economic crisis.

The national bakery owners’ union said some 3,200 of their businesses had closed, representing 95 percent of the North African country’s state-backed bakeries.

They are demanding payment of 14 months of overdue subsidies, adding up



to around nearly \$78 million, the union said.

A further 1,200 bakeries that do not receive subsidies are functioning normally.

— AFP



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In brief

■ GENEVA



COVID-19 TO REMAIN PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY: WHO

The World Health Organization (WHO) announced that the Covid-19 pandemic will remain classed as a public health emergency of international concern. The decision was made following the recommendations of an independent expert committee. The state of emergency has been in effect since January 2020.

“The pandemic is not over yet,” WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said.

The emergency status level does not automatically lead to special conditions, rather the WHO uses it to alert governments and the public of an acute threat that they must prepare. — **dpa**

■ WASHINGTON



FIRST ASIAN AMERICAN ON US CURRENCY

The US Mint will feature an Asian American on its currency for the first time when it issues a coin engraved with the image of actress Anna May Wong, who worked in Hollywood during a time of open racism and stereotyping. A quarter-dollar coin featuring a profile of Wong with her signature bangs and long fingernails will begin circulating on Tuesday as part of the American Women Quarters Programme, the US Mint said.

“I think it was her face and expressive gestures that really captivated movie audiences, so I included these elements,” said Mint designer Emily Damstra, who helped create the coin.

— **Reuters**

■ PARIS



STRIKE DISRUPTS 20 FRENCH NUCLEAR REACTORS

Twenty of France's nuclear reactors remain affected by a strike, with maintenance work delayed at 17 and lower production at three, ahead of planned talks with operator EDF, a power union representative said.

The first plenary session between the union and management at EDF is set to begin on Thursday. The union is seeking a \$117.38 per month increase in 2023 on top of the recently signed branch agreement, which was for 80 euros a month, for a total of 200 euros per employee next year, and is asking for a mid-2023 salary review. — **Reuters**

Putin declares martial law in Ukraine regions

KYIV/MIKOLAIV: President Vladimir Putin introduced martial law on Wednesday in four Ukrainian regions he says Russia has annexed as some residents of the occupied city of Kherson left by boat following warnings of a looming assault.

The images of people fleeing Kherson were broadcast by Russian state TV which portrayed the exodus - from the right to left bank of the River Dnipro - as an attempt to clear the city of civilians before it became a combat zone.

Kirill Stremousov, deputy head of the local Russia-backed administration, made a video appeal after Russian forces in the area were driven back by 20-30 km in the last few weeks. They risk being pinned against the western bank of the 2,200-km-long Dnipro river that bisects Ukraine.

In a move which looked designed to help Russia firm its grip on the Ukrainian regions it partly occupies - including Kherson - Putin told his Security Council he was introducing martial law in them.

Beyond much tighter security measures on the ground, it was unclear what the immediate impact of that would be.

Kyiv, which does not recognise Moscow's self-styled annexations of the four regions, derided the move.

“Martial law’ implementation on the occupied territories by Russia should be considered only as a pseudo-legalisation of (the) looting of Ukrainians’ property,”



A woman looks at posters honouring Russian service members at the Muzeon park in Moscow. — **AFP**

People of Ukraine win EU rights award

STRASBOURG: The European Parliament on Wednesday awarded the annual Sakharov Prize for human rights to the “brave” people of Ukraine for resisting the Russian attack.

“This award is for those Ukrainians fighting on the ground, for those who have been forced to flee, for those who have lost relatives and friends, for all those who

stand up and fight for who and what they believe in,” said Parliament president Roberta Metsola.

“I know that the brave people of Ukraine will not give up, and neither will we,” she added.

The Ukrainian people are represented “by their president Volodymyr Zelensky, their elected representatives and civil society”, the Maltese MEP

said. In the face of Russia’s “acts of pure terror” in Ukraine, the choice of the Ukrainian people was achieved by consensus among the European Parliament’s political groups, she said.

The two other finalists included detained Wikileaks founder Julian Assange, who is held in a high-security British jail. — **AFP**

Russia tightens security in seized regions as Ukraine calls martial law move meaningless

tweeted Mykhailo Podolyak, a Ukrainian presidential adviser.

“This does not change anything for Ukraine: we continue the liberation and deoccupation of our territories.”

Eight months after being attacked, Ukraine is prosecuting major counter-offensives in the east and south to try to take as much territory as it can before winter after routing Russian forces in some areas.

The conflict has killed thousands, displaced millions, pulverised Ukrainian cities, shaken the global economy and revived Cold War-era fissures.

Putin also issued a decree restricting movement in and out of eight regions adjoining Ukraine and ordered the creation of a special coordinating council under Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin to step up the faltering war effort.

Kherson is the biggest population centre Moscow has seized and held since it began its “special military operation” in Ukraine on February 24. Andriy Yermak, head of the Ukrainian president’s office, accused Russia of laying on a propaganda show there. — **Reuters**

Lula’s lead over Bolsonaro narrows in Brazil vote: poll

SAO PAULO: Brazilian presidential candidate Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva’s lead over President Jair Bolsonaro has shrunk to 5 percentage points ahead of a run-off vote set for October 30, a poll by Genial/Quaest showed on Wednesday.

Former President Lula has 47 per cent voter support, down from the last week’s 49 per cent, while Bolsonaro gained 1 point to 42 per cent.

Pollsters were widely criticised after the first-round vote for significantly underestimating support for Bolsonaro.

The survey by pollster Genial/Quaest interviewed 2,000 people between October 16 and 18 and has a margin of error of 2 percentage points.

Meanwhile, Lula da Silva criticised football star Neymar’s support of far-right incumbent

The survey by pollster Genial/Quaest interviewed 2,000 people between October 16 and 18 and has a margin of error of 2 percentage points

Jair Bolsonaro, accusing the player of being motivated by a debt “pardon”.

Last month, Neymar endorsed hardline conservative Bolsonaro as he fights to win re-election in his October 30 run-off battle against leftist ex-leader Lula.

“Neymar has the right to choose whoever he wants to be president.

I think he is afraid that if I win the election I will find out what Bolsonaro pardoned from his income tax debt,” Lula said in a

YouTube interview on Tuesday.

“I think that’s why he’s afraid of me,” Lula added, laughing, when asked about Neymar’s support for the president.

Expectations of a close contest have pushed both sides to intensify their attacks before the run-off, with Lula the frontrunner after the first-round election on October 2.

“Obviously, Bolsonaro made a deal with (Neymar’s) father. He now has an income tax problem in Spain,” Lula said, alluding to a favourable ruling the player obtained in a tax evasion trial in Brazil, as well as the charges he faces in Barcelona for alleged irregularities in his 2013 club transfer.

Lula added that it was ultimately a problem for the country’s tax collection agency, and not him. — **AFP**



Electronic ballot boxes are prepared for the upcoming presidential elections run-off by TRE employees in Brasilia. — **AFP**

Clock ticking to avert ‘genocide’ in Tigray, says WHO chief

GENEVA: The World Health Organization chief said on Wednesday time was running out to avoid “genocide” in Ethiopia’s war-torn Tigray, as Human Rights Watch called for sanctions against Addis Ababa to avert civilian deaths.

“The world is not paying enough attention,” Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters from WHO headquarters in Geneva.

“There is a very narrow window now to prevent genocide in Tigray.”

With the conflict nearing its second anniversary, Addis Ababa on Tuesday said it had captured three towns in Tigray, including Shire, which had a pre-war population of 100,000.

The conflict began on November 4, 2020, when Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed sent troops into Tigray after accusing the region’s ruling Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) of attacking federal army camps.

His campaign has received the support of Eritrea, with which Ethiopia was at odds until a rapprochement that earned Abiy the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize.

A truce between pro-government forces and rebels this year lasted five months before it collapsed in August.

International concern is now swelling for those caught in the crossfire.

The UN this week warned the situation was spiralling out of control and inflicting an “utterly staggering” toll on civilians.



Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

Tedros, who himself is from the northern region and has repeatedly condemned the situation there, said he was “running out of diplomatic language for the deliberate targeting” of civilians in Tigray.

“The social fabric is being ripped apart and civilians are paying a horrific price,” he said.

“Hostilities in Tigray must end now, including the immediate withdrawal and disengagement of Eritrean armed forces from Ethiopia.”

“Indiscriminate attacks or attacks that deliberately target civilians or civilian objects amount to war crimes,” he said.

Separately, Human Rights Watch (HRW) called for the United States, European Union and UN to apply “targeted sanctions and an arms embargo” against Ethiopia to help protect civilian lives.

“The suffering of civilians in Ethiopia should no longer be tolerated in the name of political expediency,” HRW’s director for the Horn of Africa, Laetitia Bader, said. — **AFP**

Connections make the world go round



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The writer is an entrepreneur and innovation adviser

Connections make the world go round. By connections I don't mean the Arabic word 'wasta' that suggests nepotism, but I mean those interactions and touch points that we turn into a link and a constructive relationship.

The first time I realised the potential of connections was in 2017, during a conversation between Dr Ali Qassim Jawad, the President of the Royal Academy of Management and our cohort of the National Leadership and Competitiveness Programme - NLCP at University of Oxford's Said Business School.

Today, as we witness the relentless development efforts of His Majesty Sultan Haitham's government, we also notice the

challenges facing public, private and civil society leaders in ensuring a smooth transition from the early phases of planning that can naturally start with disconnected entities working in silos, to the execution phase where these entities work together smoothly in one connected ecosystem.

One way for leaders to achieve this connection, as Dr Ali Qassim and his co-author Andrew Kakabadse advocate in their book "Leadership Intelligence: The 5Qs for 'Thriving As a Leader' is to learn and develop these five important leadership intelligences: IQ, EQ, MQ, PQ & RQ.

RQ- Resilience intelligence

Health, financial and climate spread more rapidly today due

THE 5QS FOR 'THRIVING AS A LEADER' IS TO LEARN AND DEVELOP FIVE IMPORTANT LEADERSHIP INTELLIGENCES NAMELY IQ, EQ, MQ, PQ & RQ

to globalisation. For example, Covid-19 pandemic has broken the global supply chain, and consequently our access to many goods and services to make a decent living.

For this reason our leaders today need to be resilient in powering through these interwind crisis and force majeure situations so that they are able to connect the pieces of

solutions and the big picture.

PQ- Political intelligence

Organisational restructuring entails downsizing, and rightsizing, which all impact stakeholders' livelihoods and can be unpopular. Where the question in the past was - can leaders manage? Today's it's more sophisticated - how can leaders make the right connection between: Who gets what? When? Where? And Why?

MQ - Moral intelligence

Is there such a thing as universal values? Not a month goes by with a global controversy regarding a meaningful definition of free trade or human rights or gender equity.

A connected leader should be able to connect values such as respect and justice globally and

locally in a way that is objective and harmless and felt by stakeholders in the organisation's every day practices.

Emotional intelligence

DEI&B, or Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging have become common stated goal for many leadership boards. However, it takes leaders who can understand and manage the emotions of other, and their own emotions, to breathe life into these words and connect them to our actions.

IQ- Cognitive intelligence

Challenges by nature can be sophisticated, and only leaders with these 5 Qs who are critical thinkers can simplify it and connect the dots for us, thanks to their can-do attitude and skills.

Surfers, miners fight over South Africa's white beaches

LINDA GIVETASH

To those who live here, it's like a little piece of heaven, boasting pink flamingos, white beaches and blue ocean waters.

Yet this stretch of South Africa's west coast has also become a battleground, pitching mining firms against environmentalists fearful that one of nature's last wild treasures is being bulldozed away.

Diamonds, zircon and other minerals have long been extracted in the sandy coastline near the Olifants river, which flows into the Atlantic about 300 kilometres north of Cape Town.

But plans to expand the mining have angered surfers, animal lovers and residents in this remote, sparsely populated region — and they are pushing back with lawsuits and petitions.

"It's one of the last frontiers of the South African coastline where you can go and sort of lose yourself," said surfer Mike Schleich, 45, co-founder of a green campaign group, Protect the West Coast.

Mining companies say they bring much-needed jobs to the area and insist they abide by environmental rules.

But locals contend the excavation, in which sand is extracted from beaches and the seabed and sifted for valuable minerals, is scaring off fish and tourists alike — and shrinking rather than broadening employment opportunities.

"If we are going to have sea mining, beach mining, land mining... where is the public going to have access to the coast?" questioned Suzanne Du Plessis, 61, a local resident and campaigner.

From off-shore diamond prospecting to the construction of a new harbour, several projects threaten to scar the area, a biodiversity hotspot home to dolphins, seals and succulent plants, according to Protect the West Coast.

Campaigners secured a small victory in June, when the operator of a mineral sand mine that had gained government approval to expand its activities to 10 more beaches, committed to additional environmental checks.

This came on the back of a lawsuit brought by the Centre of Environment Rights (CER), another environmental group, that was settled out of court by the mine operator, Australian-owned Minerals Commodities. But activists remain wary.

"CER is entitled to go back to court should the mine not comply with the provisions of the agreement," said CER's lawyer Zahra Omar.

The mine has already asked for more time to put together its biodiversity management plan, she said. — AFP



Liz Alderman

The writer is the Paris-based chief European business correspondent for NYT

Bread prices skyrocket as high inflation grips Europe

Since Russia's attack on Ukraine, the price of the wheat that Julien Bourgeois grinds for boulangeries at his family's flour mill in central France has increased more than 30 per cent. The bill for the electricity needed to run the mill has tripled. Even the price of paper used for flour sacks has hit the stratosphere.

All of which are driving up the price of a loaf of bread.

"Inflation is brutally high," said Bourgeois, inspecting the mill's mammoth crushers as they ground wheat into flour.

He has urged the 1,000 bakeries that his company, Moulins Bourgeois, supplies to mark up the iconic French baguette by 10 cents, from a current range of one euro to \$1.27, to offset the higher costs that he has had to pass along.

"Consumers can afford to pay more for now, but prices will keep rising," Bourgeois said.

"It's worrisome." In France, where baguettes already cost over 8 per cent more than they did a year ago, he added, "we remember that the revolution started over the price of bread."

As inflation continues to flare across Europe, few matters are causing more concern than the cost of a basic loaf.

From France to Hungary, the most essential food staple is more expensive than ever.

Bread prices are up an average of nearly 19 per cent from a year ago in the European Union — a huge increase after a rise of just over 3 per cent the year before, according to Eurostat, Europe's statistics agency, in a report released on Wednesday.

The price of food overall has spiked to record levels, reflecting one of the biggest inflation surges in decades and leaving households with less money.

In the 19 countries that use the euro, consumer prices rose to a record 9.9 per cent in September from a year earlier, and by nearly 11 per cent across the European Union, the highest in 40 years.

Food prices in the euro zone climbed by a record 14.1 per cent in the year through September, while the cost of energy surged by over 40 per cent.



Freshly-baked bread at the bakery owned by Serge and Marie Pinquet in Crecy-la-Chapelle, France.

THE WAR IN UKRAINE HAS MADE MATTERS WORSE, ROILING FOOD AND ENERGY MARKETS AND DRIVING UP PRICES FOR GRAINS, OILSEEDS AND FERTILISERS, ALL OF WHICH ARE AFFECTING THE PRICE OF BREAD.

High consumer prices are a continuing concern in the United States, as well.

The pace of inflation, near a four-decade high, remains elevated even as the Federal Reserve has undertaken aggressive policy actions to try to cool the economy.

The price of bread in the United States, for instance, increased nearly 15 per cent over the year through September.

The war in Ukraine has made matters worse, roiling food and energy markets and driving up prices for grains, oilseeds and fertilisers, Eurostat said, all of which are affecting the price of bread. Hardest hit are the Baltic and Eastern European countries near the

conflict zone that depend on grain exports from Ukraine, Europe's biggest farmland.

The price of bread has shot up 77 per cent in Hungary over the past year, according to Eurostat, and over 30 per cent in Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia.

The whirlwind has come as a shock in Germany, where the cost of bread has shot up over 18 per cent in a year, as overall inflation has zoomed into the double digits, too, reaching 10.9 per cent in September.

Fine Bagles, a bakery in Berlin, recently raised prices for its New York-style bagels to €1.20 from €1.10, and not without considerable angst, said Alice Zuza, an employee.

"There was a debate at the bakery," Zuza said. "The owners didn't want to raise prices, but, in the end, we didn't have a choice."

Russia's willingness to use energy as a weapon against countries supporting Ukraine has inflamed problems by raising gas and electricity costs for flour suppliers.

Bills are also soaring for energy-dependent businesses, including thousands of industrial and craft bakeries that run ovens most of the day.

In the Netherlands, a phalanx of bakeries have gone out of business since the end of summer as energy costs have soared. — *New York Times*

Making Vision 2040 successful

The Sultanate of Oman is making all efforts to meet the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 with the right approach and mechanism to ensure that none of the long-term goals are ignored. This is the reason His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued directives to establish 59 offices for Oman's Vision 2040, at all authorities and government organisations concerned. This is being seen as a very important step to expedite its implementation.

The objective of these offices is to keep an eye over all the efforts made in the direction and to ensure that nothing passes without being noticed by it. The vision is meticulously planned to be implemented accurately. Therefore, such a mechanism was essential so that no grey area is left in this crucial strategic developmental initiative.

The main objective of establishing these offices for Vision 2040 is to ensure that there is no compromise in terms of quality of planning and implementation of the projects by government organisations. Through this mechanism, all planning and implementation processes will be more integrated and will be more closely associated with the objectives of Oman's Vision 2040.

This is the best approach and idea to do the follow up of the implementation of the Vision 2040 so that it leaves a positive impact on every individual and the society. These offices will reassure that the vision is moving on the right path, towards ultimate success. They will also fill the gap between planning and implementation processes.

Sultan al Ramahi, Supervisor of Strategic Partnerships and Offices of the Vision 2040 in the Follow-up Unit, has said that these offices were aimed at ensuring equality and effectiveness of the planning and implementation



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THE MAIN OBJECTIVE OF ESTABLISHING THESE OFFICES FOR VISION 2040 IS TO ENSURE THAT THERE IS NO COMPROMISE IN TERMS OF QUALITY OF PLANNING AND EXECUTION

processes. It will supervise the entire process of implementation of the plans so that it matches with the aims and objectives of the vision and to ensure that they are completed within the timeframe. These offices will also have an eye over performance indicators and would see the methodology formulated to meet any challenges.

While establishing these offices, the element of their empowerment are not ignored. They needed this to perform their assigned duties. They will focus on supplementing the skills of workers and refining their capabilities through workshops and other required programmes. Transfer of awareness and knowledge is very important to make the right progress on time. It will make the work of all the government departments effective, and limit the overlapping of powers between various divisions and units.

There is no doubt that follow-up of the entire process of implementation of any programme, plan or vision is very important. It should be done through right and appropriate mechanism.

These 59 offices will meet these requirements. They have increased the hope that the pace of achieving the goals of the Vision 2040 would be accelerated and would be made accurate. The positive impact of the decision is expected to be seen on the country and its citizens soon.

The formulation of visions, plans and programmes will be fruitful if they are accompanied by strong and accurate implementation.

All the projects and initiatives of Oman's Vision 2040 do not need funds. But some of them need to be funded. If the required money is invested it will give the required results. Perhaps, this was also in the mind of our wise leadership when it decided to develop the mechanism for its implementation. Investment is not everything.

50TH ANNIVERSARY



The sails of the Sydney Opera House is seen illuminated with a projection of video artwork to kick-off year-long celebrations for the landmark's 50th anniversary, in Sydney, on Wednesday. – AFP

I’m a fighter not a quitter, says embattled UK PM Truss

ELIZABETH PIPER
AND MICHAEL HOLDEN

British Prime Minister Liz Truss said she was a “fighter not a quitter” as she tried to reassert authority over the fraught ranks of her Conservative Party on Wednesday, amid growing media reports that momentum was building to oust her.

Truss is trying to shore up support from within the party after she was forced to scrap a vast tax-cutting plan, leading some Conservative lawmakers to call for her to be replaced as leader just weeks after she took office.

She has admitted her radical economic plans went “too far and too fast” after investors dumped the pound and government bonds.

However, with mortgage rates soaring and official figures showing inflation back to a 40-year high, Truss - elected by Conservative members on a promise of tax cuts and maintaining public spending - faces a struggle to convince the public and her party she could address the cost of living crisis.

Opinion polls indicate Conservatives are some 30 points behind the main opposition Labour Party, and her own ratings are calamitous. “I have been very clear that I am sorry, and I have made mistakes,” Truss told jeering opposition lawmakers as she answered questions in parliament.

“I am somebody who’s prepared to front up. I’m prepared to take the tough

decisions.” Speculation about the prime minister’s future continues to grow, with media reporting that rebellious Conservatives are weighing up who should replace her, not if she should go.

As she was quizzed on her economic policy U-turns, Conservative lawmakers in parliament looked noticeably uneasy. “I think her position is becoming increasingly untenable,” Conservative lawmaker Steve Double earlier told Times radio.

“We’ve seen a complete reversal of just about everything she stood for in her leadership election

campaign. I think many of us are asking exactly what does Liz Truss now believe and stand for?”

Truss also faced ridicule from Labour leader Keir Starmer, who commented a new book was being written about her time in office which was due to be out by Christmas. “Is that the release date or the title?” he asked. He later said she was asking him questions about Labour policy because “we’re a government in waiting”.

Truss and her new finance minister, Jeremy Hunt, are desperately trying to balance the books after her now-scrapped

economic programme shattered investor confidence. They are also trying to avoid alienating Conservative lawmakers or losing further public support. She told parliament she was committed to increasing state pensions in line with the level of inflation, after ministers refused for days to guarantee this would be the case, drawing widespread criticism. But, she declined to give the same reassurance for welfare payments and foreign aid. She also sought to avert any Conservative opposition to fracking by promising details later on Wednesday of how local

communities would be able to give their consent to any future projects. That announcement would coincide with a Labour vote on whether there should an outright ban on fracking, after the government last month lifted a moratorium in England that had been in place since 2019.

Conservative ‘whips’, responsible for enforcing discipline among their lawmakers, have sent a message saying the vote would be treated as a “confidence motion in the government”.

Commentators said winning this vote could allow her and her supporters to say the party had confidence in her leadership.

Meanwhile, British Conservative lawmaker William Wragg said on Wednesday he had submitted a letter of no confidence in Prime Minister Liz Truss after being “ashamed” of her mini-budget.

The government has told lawmakers that a vote on her fracking policy later on Wednesday would be treated as a test of confidence, and those who vote against it will be removed from the parliamentary party.

Wragg, who opposes fracking, said he would vote with the government so that a letter of no confidence he had submitted would not become void. “I wish to maintain that letter,” he told parliament. — Reuters



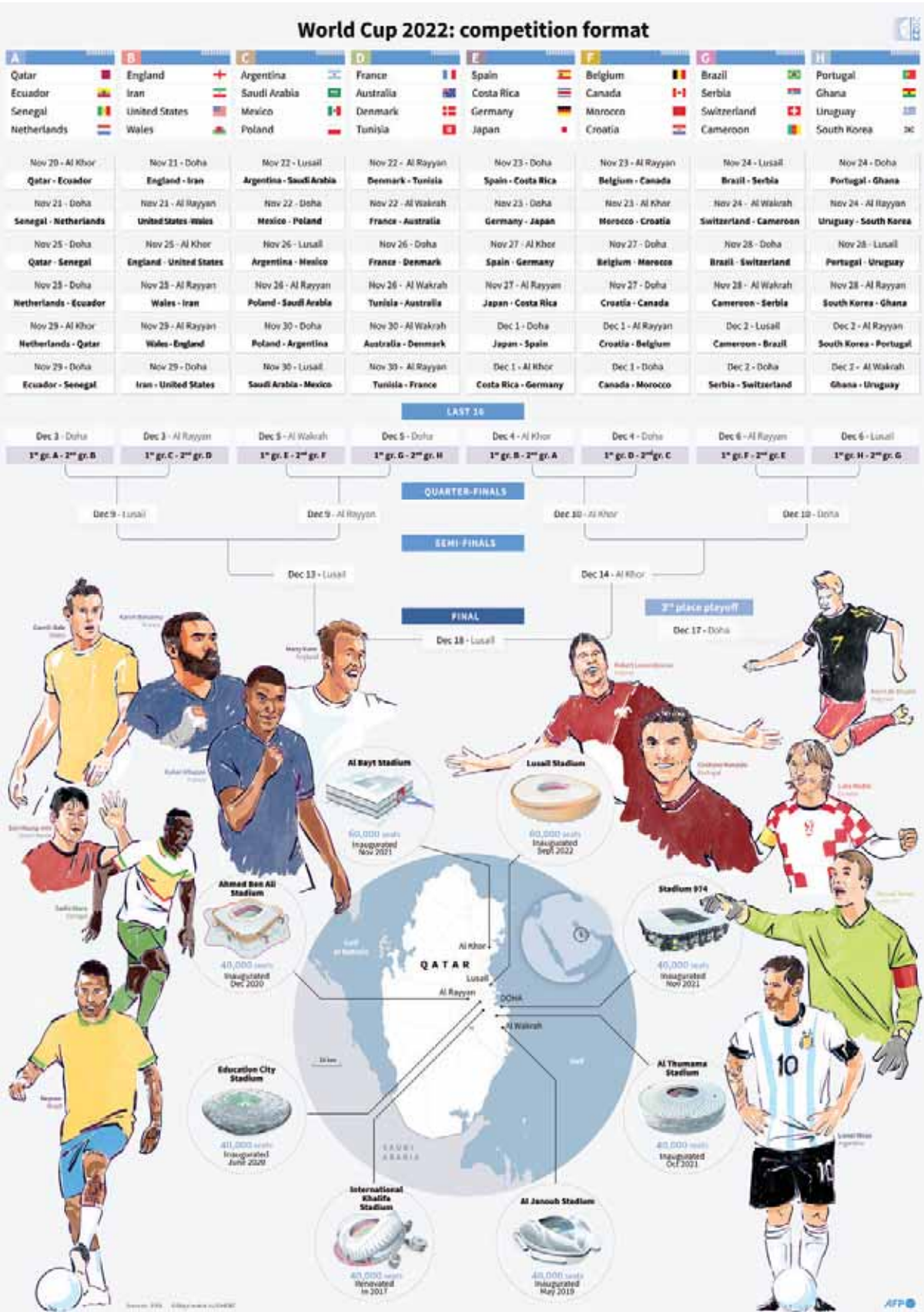
In this file photo Britain's Prime Minister Liz Truss reacts as she arrives at Conservative Party Headquarters in central London. – AFP

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Players to watch in the 2022 Qatar World Cup



Brazil earn tag of favourites

EUROPEAN ARMADA FLOUNDERING AMID FITNESS CONCERNS

PARIS: With a month to go until the World Cup it is Brazil who have earned the tag of favourites as the South Americans seek to win the trophy for the sixth time while Europe's heavyweights are plagued by question marks about form and fitness.

What happened in the past may be irrelevant, particularly in the first World Cup in the Middle East and the first to be played in November and December.

But history might play a part as all of the Brazilians' last four World Cup triumphs came outside Europe.

If they crumbled under the pressure as hosts in 2014 and underperformed in Russia four years ago, they head to Qatar on a formidable run and with a strong squad not overly reliant on Neymar.

He will still attract the most attention, but coach Tite has a formidable squad — from Alisson Becker in goal, to the steel of Fabinho and Casemiro in midfield, the pace of Vinicius Junior and the goal threat of Roberto Firmino and Richarlison.

"Brazil today are much more prepared and experienced. They don't depend on one player," Seleccion legend Cafu recently told Globoesporte.

"We have a team that will allow that player to stand out. I think Brazil look good and have a good chance of winning the World Cup."

The big question mark surrounding Brazil, however, is that they have not been tested by leading European opposition since Belgium dumped Tite's side out of the 2018 World Cup in the quarterfinals.

MESSI'S LAST CHANCE
In contrast, Argentina pitted their wits against Italy earlier this year in London and the Copa America winners triumphed

3-0. The two-time world champions are also heading to Qatar in good shape, unbeaten in 35 games since losing to Brazil at the 2019 Copa America.

Currently ranked third in the world, coach Lionel Scaloni does not have the same depth of quality as Brazil but there are enough good players to bring out the best in Lionel Messi, scorer of nine goals in his country's last three games.

At 35, this is Messi's last chance to win a World Cup and that motivation could be powerful.

"It is very likely my last World Cup, yes," Messi told ESPN recently.

"We come into it with a well-equipped and strong squad, but anything can happen. Every game is so difficult and it is not always the favourites who win it."

CAN FRANCE DEFEND TITLE?
Just look at France in 2002, when a team led by an injured Zinedine Zidane went to South Korea as the holders and reigning European champions, only to crash out in the group stage without scoring a goal.

Two decades on, Les Bleus are again the holders but all is not right in Didier Deschamps' squad.

Kylian Mbappe has been distracted by reports he wants out of Paris Saint-Germain, while injuries are creating headaches.

The all-action N'Golo Kante will miss the tournament and Paul Pogba is battling to get back to fitness after knee surgery.

Then again, Deschamps does have a strike pairing of Mbappe and Karim Benzema, the new Ballon d'Or.

"I hope to be in the squad for Qatar, to go to the World Cup and do everything to win it," Benzema said this week.

At least France will be there, unlike Italy who failed to qualify a year after winning the Euro.

Form is an issue for England, who went six games without a win in a disastrous Nations League campaign and are also set to be without their rampaging right-back Reece James, one of their best players, due to injury.

It is not clear if Germany are really any better than the side that went out of Euro 2020 in the last 16, despite Hansi Flick replacing Joachim Loew as coach since then.

The Netherlands are back but do they, or for that matter Belgium, really look like potential World Cup winners?

Portugal are wondering if they need to faze out Cristiano Ronaldo and give more space to their younger attacking stars.

It also remains to be seen if Spain have the defence or the attack to go all the way, and that leaves two other questions to be answered.

Can a European surprise package emerge, like Croatia in 2018? If so, then Denmark and Serbia may be worth watching.

Alternatively, can Sadio Mane's Senegal go far on the back of winning the Africa Cup of Nations?

As for Brazil and Argentina, by winning their groups they would be set on a course to meet in the semifinals with the ultimate prize then within sight.

Right now that looks plausible, but with domestic leagues in action right up to the World Cup much can change in the next few weeks.



Argentina's Lionel Messi in action with Brazil's Matheus Cunha. – Reuters file photo

West Indies stay alive as Ireland celebrate

HOBART, Australia: A fiery four-wicket spell from pace bowler Alzarri Joseph helped the two-time champion West Indies storm past Zimbabwe by 31 runs to keep their Twenty20 World Cup dreams alive on Wednesday, while Ireland upset Scotland.

After being shocked by Scotland in their opening match on Monday, the West Indies had no margin for error if they wanted to stay in the hunt for a place in the Super 12 stage.

And they accomplished the feat at Bellerive Oval in Hobart with 10 balls to spare, dismissing Zimbabwe for 122 after setting them 154 to win.

The dangerous Joseph was instrumental, taking 4-16 while Jason Holder chipped in with 3-12 to rescue them after another batting collapse after they won the toss and chose to bat.

“We are learning together and that’s what’s important,” said West Indies skipper Nicholas Pooran.

“Jason put his hand up as our most experienced bowler here so it’s nice to see him performing the way he is. Alzarri Joseph, it’s not just now but since the beginning of the year he’s been our best bowler in T20 cricket.”

The victory means they meet Ireland on Friday with the winner going through to the next round when the big guns join the tournament, while Zimbabwe face Scotland in a winner-takes-all tie.

Ireland stayed in contention with a stunning six-wicket upset of the



Scots with George Dockrell and Curtis Campher starring in a 119-run partnership after they looked out for the count.

Zimbabwe were without captain Craig Ervine who suffered a “mild asthmatic attack” before the game and the West Indies were

aggressive early on. But they paid the price with Kyle Mayers (13) top edging Blessing Muzarabani to wicketkeeper Regis Chakabva, who was deputising as skipper.

Johnson Charles unleashed in the ninth over, hitting 6-4-4 off Ryan Burl to get the scoreboard moving

before Evin Lewis (15) was out and Pooran (7) fell soon after.

When Charles was comically run out for 45 in a mix-up with Rovman Powell, they were reeling.

Zimbabwe kept the pressure on and Sikander Raza trapped Shamarah Brooks lbw then caught

and bowled Holder with the West Indies losing four wickets for 11 runs in 12 balls to leave them on 101-6.

Powell (28) and Akeal Hosein (23 not out) threw the bat in a late flourish to ensure they set a competitive target.

GREAT CRICKET

In reply, Zimbabwe slammed 18 in a nightmare first over from Mayers.

Undeterred, the Caribbean side made a breakthrough in the third over when Regis Chakabva dragged the ball onto his stumps off Joseph.

Joseph took his second with a lightning delivery to remove Tony Munyonga and Sean Williams fell two balls later as the pressure began building.

All-rounder Raza slammed 82 off 48 balls in Zimbabwe’s first match on Monday, but he was out for 14 and when Joseph came back in the attack he shattered the stumps of Richard Ngarava and Luke Jongwe to end any hope they had.

In the earlier game, Scotland powered to 176-5 — the tournament’s highest score so far on the back of 86 from Michael Jones — for what looked like a winning total.

When they reduced the Irish to 65-4 after 10 overs it looked all over.

But Campher (69 off 32 balls) and Dockrell (39 off 27) came to the crease and unleashed some fireworks to steer them home against the odds with an over to spare.

“Pretty special, I can’t remember a more important partnership,” said Ireland captain Andrew Balbirnie after their highest ever successful run chase at a World Cup.

“We have played some great cricket throughout the year, only to fall away towards the end, but credit to the guys for the partnership.” — AFP

OAA to launch season with Bidiyah Sand Car Challenge

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, OCT 19

On Friday, Bidiyah Square in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate will witness the launching of the opening round of the Sand Car Challenge, organised by the Bidiyah Endurance Racing Club in cooperation with the Oman Automobile Association.

Faisal bin Humaid al Hajri, head of the Bidiyah Endurance Racing Club, confirmed that “the organising committee continues its field efforts to host the opening round in the season 2022-23, which include three categories of competitions, six-cylinder category, the eight-cylinder category and the open category”.

“Pointing out that endurance motor racing represents one of the most prominent youth sports in the state, the competition



excitement and suspense among Omani and GCC participants, the competition expected large number of fans from various governorates of Oman, in addition to foreign tourists that visit the sand terrain during the winter season,” he said.

The Oman Automobile Association applies the applicable regulations and laws

to provide all safety measures for drivers, in six, eight cylinder and open category. The participants are allowed to use any type of tyres with 35 as maximum size, they are not entitled to use gas, super or turbo in all categories, the driver has to wear the full sports uniform, seat belt and helmet with availability of a fire extinguisher with safety chassis

from the inside, also required to install a safety guard for open-top cars, the contestant allowed to remove the co-driver seat, engine cover and to change the original fuel tank, also can change windows to reinforced plastic to reduce the vehicle’s weight.

In the six- and eight-cylinder categories, the contestant have only two attempts to start at 20 metres before the sensitive device to the ending point at 60 metres, the total length is 80 metres, and 15 minutes as maximum time between two attempts.

In the open categories, the contestant have only two attempts to start at 5 metres before the sensitive device to the ending point at 60 metres, the total length is 65 metres, and 15 minutes as maximum time between two attempts.



Seeb players raring to lift historic AFC Cup 2022

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 19

Oman’s representatives Seeb arrived to Kuala Lumpur City, Malaysia, on Tuesday to meet Kuala Lumpur City FC on Saturday in the final clash of the AFC Cup 2022 at the Bukit Jalil National Stadium.

After their arrival, the Seeb heroes began their first rigorous training sessions in Kuala Lumpur on Wednesday evening under watchful eyes of national experienced head coach Rasheed Jaber.

During the warm-up session, Jaber focused on physical training after the flight trip. Later, he instructed the players for different technical and tactical training. Two more practices sessions will remain for Seeb players to shape their final readiness ahead for the final.

Seeb are just one victory away from lifting a historic AFC Cup title and the team will be keen on registering a historic

accomplishment for Seeb in this edition of AFC Cup. Seeb squad featured 23 players including: Ahmed Faraj al Rawahi, Abdullah Jameel, Juma al Habsi, Mohammed al Musallami, Mohammed al Amri, Ali al Busaidy, Daniel Ajbola, Hassan al Ajmi, Eid al Farsi, Abdulaziz al Maqbali, Mohsin al Ghassani, Salah al Yahyaei, Kesmos Dawoda, Mohammed Said, Essam al Makhzoomi, Ahmed al Syiabi, Yousef al Malki, Marwan Taeab, Tamim al Balushi, Abdullah al Habsi, Arfan Abdullah and Mohammed al Hatmi.

Seeb secured spot in the AFC Cup final in a style after thrashing Bahrain’s Al Riffa 4-0 in the West Zone final. Drawn in the West Zone’s Group A, Seeb began their campaign with a 1-0 win over Syria’s Jableh. That was followed by a 2-1 defeat to three-time AFC Cup winners Kuwait SC and then they cruised to a 4-0 win over Al Ansar to finish as the Group A winners. In the West Zone semifinal, Seeb edged Arabi SC of Kuwait 2-1.





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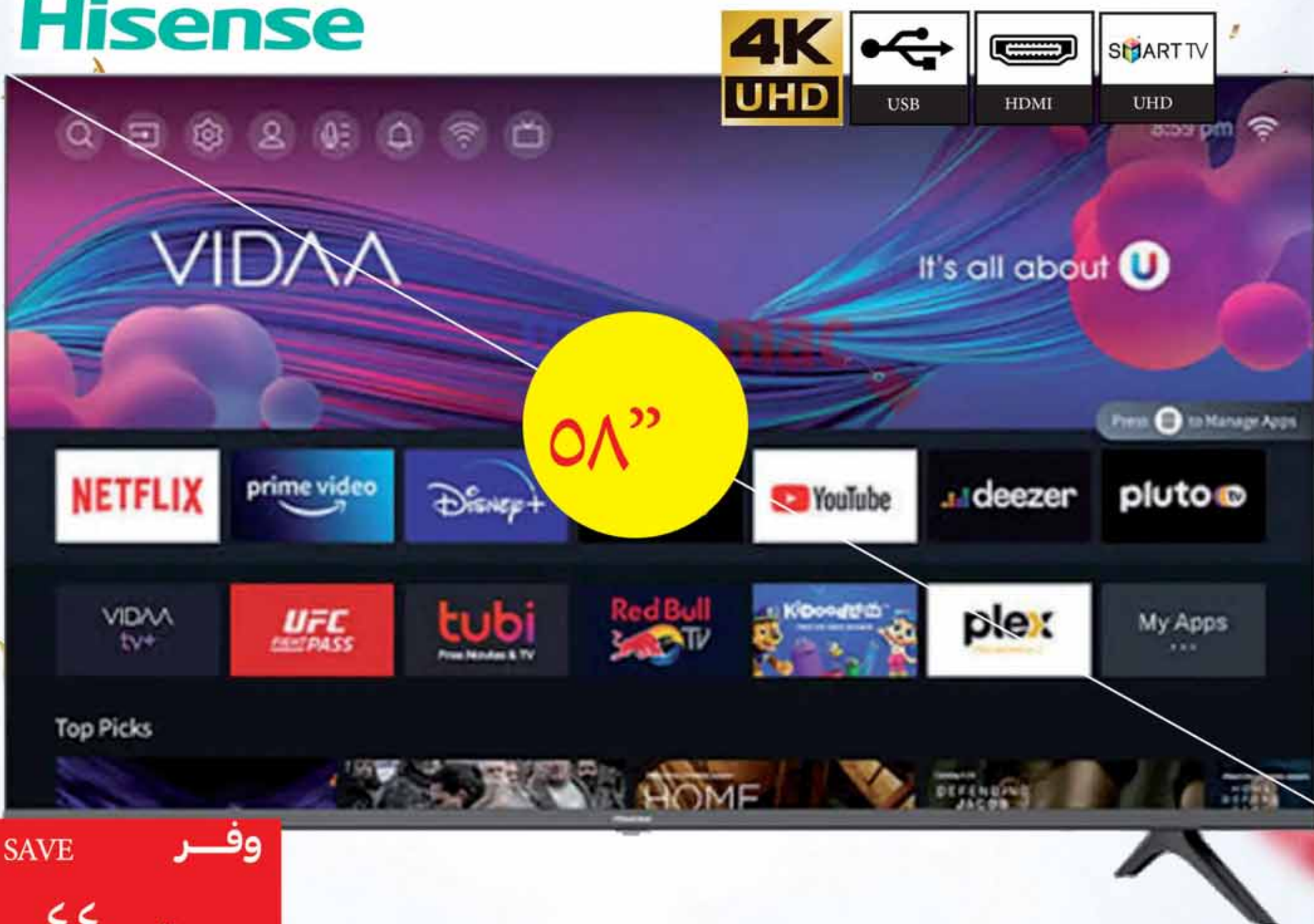
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Duqm SEZ to fuel Oman’s clean energy aspirations

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, OCT 19

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) has underscored the pivotal role of Duqm SEZ in crystallising Oman’s ambitions to develop a green-hydrogen based economic future.

Ahmed bin Hassan al Dheeb, Vice-President – OPAZ, said a number of agreements have been signed with local and international investors for the establishment of green energy projects in the SEZ at Duqm. These projects will materialise in the coming years, he stated.

Speaking at the OER Business Summit 2022, held at Sheraton Oman Hotel on Wednesday, Al Dheeb said: “It is the clean energy that everyone is talking about in the world. The Sultanate of Oman is one of the countries that is



participating strongly in this field and has begun to develop policies to support the growth of green hydrogen production. Oman enjoys a comparative advantage in the green energy space.”

Deliberations during the day-long conference focused on the competitiveness of the Omani

economy, the enabling factors for making the private sector a major driver of GDP growth, the impact of people and institutional performance on the economy, and talent development and growth.

His Highness Dr Adham bin Turki al Said, Assistant Professor

for Economics, Sultan Qaboos University, who is also CEO and Co-Founder, The Firm for Business and Economic Consulting, was the keynote speaker at the summit, which was organised by UMS Group.

A key panel discussion moderated by HH Dr Adham

focused on enhancing the competitiveness of Oman’s economy, improving the ease of doing business and attracting domestic and foreign investment, negotiating a disruptive global business environment and changing brick and mortar businesses to a more technology/

digital led model.

A workshop on understanding learning experience platforms (LXPs) and how they can unleash a learning culture in an organisation was held alongside the summit.

Leveraging social learning and the abundant learning content available in the world wide web, LXPs are democratising the learning process and putting the learner in the driver’s seat when it comes to choosing relevant content for their own development. The workshop focused on the emerging technology of learning experience platforms and how organisations can leverage them for building skills and talent.

The OER Business Summit brought together business leaders, senior government officials and international experts to deliberate on the roadmap to a better future and fulfilling the Oman Vision 2040 plan.

Salalah Mills obtains RO 10m loan to finance industrial bakery in Khazaen

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, OCT 19

Salalah Mills Company, which owns and operates Oman’s biggest flour milling complex in Dhofar Governorate, has disclosed to shareholders that it has signed a financing agreement with Alizz Islamic Bank covering a sum of RO 10 million for the financing of a new industrial bakery project at Khazaen Economic City in Barka.

The announcement came in a filing to the Capital Market Authority on Wednesday. Salalah Mills CFO Ravi C Tripathi said the tenure of the loan is about 10 years.

Earlier this year, publicly-listed



Salalah Mills revealed plans to set up a flour-based food processing hub at Khazaen with an initial investment of RO 12.5 million.

Company Chairman Ahmed bin Abdullah al Rawas stated in the Q1 Directors’ report that the new investment is in line with Salalah Mills’ strategy to grow its flour-

based food processing industrial base. Envisaged in the first phase of its implementation are an industrial bakery and multiple production lines for frozen and semi-baked pastries.

Located at Raysut Industrial City, Salalah Mills has a flour milling capacity of 1,500 metric tonnes (MT) per day, effectively making it the largest miller in the Sultanate of Oman.

Complementing this capacity is a complex of silos that can hold up to 161,500 MT of wheat, which is also the largest of its kind in the country. In addition, the company owns three unloading machines at Port of Salalah with a discharge capacity of 1,500 MT per hour.

Media briefing on Oman’s green hydrogen strategy next week

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Energy and Minerals will hold a press conference on Sunday, October 23, to announce the launch of opportunities and incentives for investment in the green hydrogen sector.

Details about this year’s Green Energy Summit Oman (GHSO) will be unveiled as well. The conference will discuss the details of the recent Royal Directives on Oman’s strategy for achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 and the establishment of the Oman Sustainability Centre to keep pace with global trends in reducing carbon emissions.

The ministry has taken important steps towards accelerating the procedures for regulating the new hydrogen sector, developing the legal frameworks and policies necessary for its growth, allocating the appropriate sites for its production in order to enhance the attraction of investments, work to localise this technology and prepare the necessary studies for it.

The carbon management laboratory and



its deliberations will also reflect positively on Oman’s efforts to achieve Net Zero – a step that will also contribute to diversifying sources of income and creating opportunities for sustainable economic and social growth, while balancing sustainable development, reducing the repercussions of climate change, leveraging clean technology to achieve sustainability, building a knowledge economy and diversifying energy sources.

Oman’s e-fisheries platform expands into Saudi Arabia

JOMAR MENDOZA
@JmObserver

Boosted by its success since the launch of its bidding website in 2020, Behar — Oman’s first e-fisheries platform — has signed an agreement with Al Fahda Development and Investment Company in Saudi Arabia to establish a fish trading e-platform connecting fish markets between the Sultanate of Oman and Saudi Arabia.

The agreement was signed after Mohammed al Huseini, co-founder and innovator of Behar platform, presented the

company’s profile and expansion plans during the Gulf Forum for Entrepreneurs held recently in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

The agreement was signed with the aim of opening Saudi Arabia to market Omani fish to enable fish merchants to sell their products at a better value at a higher quality and deliver them in a shorter period of time.

Al Huseini said, “Behar is an Omani electronic platform that displays fish sales windows and opens the way for traders, both local and international, to buy fresh and high quality fish.”

The company launched its new



portal, Behar Plus in April 2020, which offers an online marketplace for fresh fish merchants and stores to sell their products to individual

customers.

Buyers can check out what’s on offer in their local fish markets, select the fish and quantities they want online, and request delivery of the purchased items at their doorstep.

Behar Plus makes it simple for individuals and families to do all of their shopping for fresh fish online, without having to step out of their homes.

Behar is one of three Omani start-ups selected by Oman Technology Fund (OTF), a specialised government-backed fund that invests in IT and innovative start-ups, for funding

support from an endowment of RO 1 million earmarked for Omani entrepreneurial initiatives.

Fishermen and brokers can use this integrated platform to offer their fresh merchandise to leading supermarket chains and other distributors operating across Oman.

As a bidding platform, sellers quote a minimum price as the starting bid on their goods and solicit offers from registered wholesale buyers. Offers close within five minutes of the goods being posted on the website with the highest bidder eventually clinching the deal.

Bank Muscat wins Best Performing Company - Large Cap award

MUSCAT: In recognition of its role as the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman and outstanding excellence across all operations, Bank Muscat recently won the award for Best Performing Company – Large Cap at the 12th edition of Alam Al-Iktisaad Awards.

The award was handed over by the Chief Guest, His Excellency Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, to Ahmed bin Faqir al Balushi, Chief Banking Officer, Bank Muscat, at the gala event. Overall, 15 top ranking MSX-listed companies were felicitated at the awards function across three categories – large cap, mid cap and small cap – based on their performance on select financial parameters. The event witnessed the congregation of a large number of important dignitaries and business leaders from Oman.

Speaking on the occasion, Ahmed bin Faqir al Balushi, Chief Banking Officer said: “The Bank is delighted to win this Award, which is a recognition of both recent accomplishments and also its enduring leadership over the past four decades. We would like to thank Alam Al-Iktisaad for recognising the Bank’s successful leadership and other achievements across various spheres. Going ahead, the Bank will aim to continue its market-leading position in the Sultanate of Oman’s



financial services sector while also expanding its social impact through a large number of sustainability and social responsibility initiatives.”

He concluded by expressing his sincere thanks and appreciation to customers for their strong confidence in Bank Muscat’s services and products. It is a matter of great pride that as the first choice for over 2 million customers, Bank Muscat leads

the financial services sector in the Sultanate of Oman with about RO 13 billion in assets, 174 branches and more than 800 touchpoints including Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs) and Cash Deposit Machines (CDMs) installed across the country.

The Bank has consistently won a number of international and local awards and accolades in recognition of its leadership position in Oman. Earlier this year, the Bank was

selected by Forbes Middle East as one of the Top 30 Banks in the region as well as one of the Top 100 Listed Companies in the Middle East.

Bank Muscat is also a multiple award winner across its operations and has been continuously receiving awards and accolades from renowned global publications like The Banker, Global Finance, EMEA Finance, Euromoney, and Asiamoney.

Muzn Islamic Banking supports IFN Forum 2022

MUSCAT: National Bank of Oman’s (NBO) Islamic Banking Window, Muzn, recently supported the seventh annual Islamic Finance News (IFN) Forum 2022, partnering with leading



institutions, Islamic finance practitioners and regulators from across the region to explore the latest industry trends and opportunities for growth.

Sulaiman Mohammed, Head of Islamic Products and Segments, Muzn Islamic Banking, moderated a lively panel discussion entitled ‘Funding the Future: Islamic Sustainable Finance and Investment’ which brought together experienced industry analysts to offer insight into emerging markets such as green infrastructure and how existing sectors can transition to sustainable financing.

Salima al Marzouqi, Chief Islamic Banking Officer at Muzn, said, “Oman has become a leading nation in the local and regional Islamic finance industry, and the sector is in a position to make further advances into new growth sectors.

As NBO’s Islamic banking window, Muzn is committed to unlock new opportunities and support our customers to flourish.

We drive growth and discover unexplored value, particularly through products that have positive impact on the society and also help to fund national and social development through Islamic finance to deliver long-term benefits.”

Taageer Finance wins Leasing & Finance Company of the Year award

MUSCAT: Taageer Finance was felicitated with the ‘Leasing & Finance Company of the Year’ Award at the prestigious Alam Al-Iktisaad Awards 2022 held recently. Taageer Finance’s CEO Shahin bin Mohammed al Balushi received the trophy from Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage & Tourism, in the presence of over 250 industry leaders.

On the occasion, Al Balushi stated, “We are pleased with the coveted award. It further strengthens our belief that we are on the right track to lead the growth of finance & leasing industry and make a significant contribution in the social development and economic progress of the Sultanate of Oman in alignment with the Vision 2040 under the dynamic leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

Over the past two decades, Taageer Finance has carved a niche for itself among the Finance & Leasing companies and positioning itself with sustained and stable growth. With a consistent track record of strong growth in revenue, profitability, portfolio and market share as



well as dividends to the shareholders, Taageer Finance has transformed into a market leader in the finance & leasing industry and a brand of choice for the customers.”

Taageer Finance’s revenue increased by 15.5%, net profit was up by 30.7% and gross portfolio surged by 17.48% on a year-on-year growth basis by the end of June 2022. The company’s market share also increased by 4.4% during the period December 2018 to June 2022. Taageer Finance has also taken several digital transformation initiatives in the recent times.

Bank Nizwa highlights opportunities and challenges for Islamic finance

MUSCAT: In line with its unwavering commitment to spearhead transformation in the Islamic banking sector, Bank Nizwa recently participated as the Lead Partner at the 7th annual IFN Oman Forum which was held by Islamic Finance magazine — one of the leading international publication in the industry of Islamic Finance — in partnership with the Capital Market Authority.

The thought leadership event witnessed attendance of key delegates from leading financial establishments, industry experts, and potential investors from around the region.

The forum, through a series of high-level dialogues, panel discussions, and case studies,



highlighted the various capital and investment opportunities available for Sharia-compliant institutions in the Omani market. It also addressed the prevalent challenges in the Islamic finance industry while reviewing viable solutions to deal with an ever-evolving market.

Driving innovative change in the sector, Bank Nizwa actively participated in a number of

panel discussions with the bank’s Chief Executive Officer, Khalid al Kayed, leading the conversation on ‘Islamic Financial Services: Momentum and Success’. Other prominent speakers from the bank were Mujahid al Zadjali, General Manager, IT and Operations, Mohammed Sajari, Head of Sharia Structuring, and Suad al Balushi, Head of Treasury.

Nominations open for Oman Sustainability Week 2023 Awards

MUSCAT: The 2023 edition of Oman Sustainability Week (OSW) Awards, to be held on March 12, 2023, will be jointly organised by be’ah (co-organiser) and CONNECT (organiser), in partnership with the globally renowned Centre for Sustainability and Excellence (CSE), and under the patronage of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals.

They will be held as an integral part of Oman Sustainability Week (12-16 March) which has Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) as the Host Organisation, be’ah and Oman Shell as the Strategy Partner, and BP Oman as the Platinum Sponsor of Oman

Sustainability Week.

Established as a prestigious annual event, the Awards will assess organisations operating in Oman in the areas of sustainability and corporate responsibility. In accordance with sustainability initiatives identified under Oman Vision 2040, the focus of the Awards will be on clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, industry innovation and infrastructure, sustainable cities and responsible consumption and production.

The primary goal of the OSW Awards is to raise awareness regarding sustainability issues and to assist businesses and



organisations in incorporating responsible and sustainable practices into their corporate strategy, thereby demonstrating

that economic, social, and environmental responsibility is a long-term commitment.

Aligned with the UN Sustainable

Development Goals, the OSW Awards continue to recognise vital contributions to sustainability that have helped businesses surge ahead of their competitors.

Themes under the Environment segment will cover Environmental Strategy, Environmental Management System, Energy Consumption, Water Consumption, Emissions, Waste Management and Environmental Impacts; the Social segment will include Strategy, Measure Social Impact, Local Communities Support, Supply Chain, Customer Health and Safety, Customer Privacy; the Governance segment will focus

on Corporate Vision and Values, Strategic Goals on Sustainability, Anti-Corruption Policy and Stakeholder Engagement; whereas the Employment segments will cover health, safety, wellness and wellbeing, and Training and Education.

Organisations wishing to provide a submission may submit an ‘expression of interest’ from October 17, 2022 to November 21, 2022. As per the set structure, submissions for the OSW Awards will be scored against internationally recognised Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) framework.



OPAZ delegation visits Port of Rotterdam in Netherlands



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 19

Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), visited the International Port of Rotterdam in the Kingdom of the Netherlands and met with Allard Castelein, CEO at Port of Rotterdam and a number of officials.

During the meeting, both parties discussed mechanisms to activate the joint cooperation between Port of Sohar, Port of Rotterdam and the free zones in the Sultanate of Oman. They also touched on ways to maximise the benefits of renewable energy for the production and export of green hydrogen.

The delegation also visited a number of facilities operating in the areas adjacent to Port of Rotterdam, including facilities of green fuel production and emission of the associated carbon dioxide resulting from industrial production operations.

DURING THE MEETING, BOTH PARTIES DISCUSSED MECHANISMS TO ACTIVATE THE JOINT COOPERATION BETWEEN PORT OF SOHAR, PORT OF ROTTERDAM AND THE FREE ZONES IN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN.

The Chairman and accompanying delegation also met with a number of port officials and companies operating in the fields of logistics, information technology and energy.

On the sidelines of this visit, the Chairman met with a group of trainees who are on a scholarship programme from the Sohar Free Zone and Sohar Port.

The meetings were attended by Shaikh Dr Abdullah bin Salim al Harthi, Oman's Ambassador to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Omar bin Mahmoud al Mahrizi, CEO of Sohar Free Zone, and Emile Hoogsteden, CEO of Sohar Port.

Oman Infrastructure Fund to tap new investors by leveraging ESG

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, OCT 19

The Oman Infrastructure Investment Fund (Rakiza Fund), which operates under the auspices of the Oman Investment Authority (OIA), says its strong adherence to Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles in its corporate policies is helping unlock new investment inflows into the fund.

The Muscat-based investment fund is managed jointly by Oman Infrastructure Investment Management (OIIM), an affiliate of OIA, and London-based Equitix, a leading global investor, developer, and long-term fund manager of core infrastructure assets.

At a forum held earlier this week on Islamic banking and finance, organised by Redmoney Events in cooperation with the Capital Market Authority (CMA), a top official underlined Rakiza's commitment to ESG principles in bringing on board regional and international investors as partners.

Rehab al Lawati (**pictured**), Chief Operations Officer – Rakiza, said the fund is also embedding sharia-compliance into its model with a view to tapping into promising Islamic finance opportunities in the region.

Participating in a panel discussion on the theme, 'Islamic Sustainable Finance and Investment', Rehab said Rakiza's strong embrace of ESG and sharia-compliant sustainability principles came in response to expectations from prospective investors.

Set up in 2019 as a vehicle to support investment in the Omani



and Saudi markets, the fund has been overall well-received by investors, but for one specific shortcoming: the absence of ESG and sharia-compliant principles underpinning its investment model.

"For us at the time, (ESG) was a very new technology here in Oman," the official noted. "We had to develop an entire policy around ESG within the organisation, to cater to investor demand. It was not only the policy, but also the whole culture of getting the data to (embed) ESG – so we had to start educating the companies, educating the stakeholders around us about the importance of ESG."

Following interest from potential regional investors, Rakiza then began the task of incorporating sharia-compliance into its investment model, the Chief Operations Officer said.

Both ESG and sharia-compliance exercises – while a

"tough learning experience" for the Fund – nevertheless proved an opportunity to bring in a different set of investors into the country, she stated.

With leading banks in the Gulf region committing to ESG and sharia-compliant structures, Omani institutions have no choice but to be suitably geared up as well, the official stressed. This is particularly the case with Islamic finance, which is projected to grow at the rate of around 10 per cent annually, she noted.

The Chief Operations Officer also urged state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in Oman not to limit their funding requirements to the conventional side of the international debt market, but to also consider green lending opportunities as well – a move that opens up a wider market to tap, she said.

Over the past year, Rakiza has grown rapidly in the local and

regional infrastructure funding space.

In June this year, Rakiza Telecommunication Infrastructure LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Rakiza Fund, said it would purchase a 30 per cent minority stake in a newly incorporated holding company for Omantel's passive infrastructure assets in Oman, with London-based Helios Towers retaining the remaining 70 per cent.

Earlier this year, Rakiza signed agreements to acquire a stake of over 31 per cent in Oman International Container Terminal (presently known as Hutchison Ports Sohar) at Sohar Port.

More recently, Rakiza announced that it had received a capital commitment of SAR 1.125 billion, equivalent to RO 115 million, from the Saudi Public Investment Fund, one of the world's biggest sovereign wealth funds.

Amid global uncertainty and turmoil, gold looks for stability



HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

The author is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for the CBO and OCCL.

GOLD IS USUALLY CONSIDERED AS A HEDGE AGAINST INFLATION, AS IT IS SENSITIVE TO INTEREST RATES AND DOES NOT GENERATE RETURNS IN SUCH SITUATIONS, LEADING TO THE DECLINE IN ITS PRICE. THE WEAKER THE DOLLAR, THE GREATER THE RISE OF GOLD.

While many imported and locally manufactured goods and products are the subject of inflationary pressures around the world, the precious metal, gold, has witnessed a remarkable decline in the recent past, reaching its lowest level seen more than two years.

Observers expect that gold prices are on the way to record a decline due to expectations of a significant increase in interest rates by the world's central banks to tame rising inflation.

Gold prices fell to \$1661.97 an ounce recently. Prices have fallen significantly during the past two months, coinciding with the rise of the dollar, through which international oil prices are also priced, which also constitutes a dilemma for many peoples of the world because of their desire to obtain energy products at prices that suit both producers and consumers at the same time.

Gold is considered highly sensitive to rising interest rates. With the decline in gold prices, we find that the prices of other

metals traded on world markets, such as silver, platinum and palladium, to be on the decline as well.

Gold is usually considered as a hedge against inflation, as it is sensitive to interest rates and does not generate returns in such situations, leading to the decline in its price. The weaker the dollar, the greater the rise of gold.

One wonders whether this constitutes an opportunity for investors to buy gold at the present time or to stay away from it. The current global situation is unstable due to the Russian-Ukrainian war, which is raging daily.

It is well-known that investors pivot to gold in the event of wars and natural disasters. The prices of this metal depend on supply and demand, and the quantities produced.

Demand is driven by the desire of individuals and institutions to acquire it.

It is also affected by the monetary and financial policies and decisions of global central banks, in addition to the fluctuation of the purchasing

power of the US dollar.

Gold prices also vary in the event of political events and turmoil in the world, as some investors take advantage of their money to risk heading towards the markets to buy this metal in addition to investing in the stock and bond markets.

Investors are also well aware that gold is a precious metal, and is distinguished from other metals by several characteristics, including its attractive appearance and its ability to maintain its shape for long periods, but its high price is due to its scarcity linked to the challenges of extracting the metal in difficult mining operations and refining it from among other metals.

Gold has played a major role in the past because of its economic and social importance in people's dealings with each other to obtain products and other commodities by bartering with this metal, while many governments take this currency as a reserve in central and commercial banks. Now it looks for stability.

Al Wusta Fisheries obtains certification for sustainable fishing



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 19

Al Wusta Fisheries Industries (Oman Pelagic), a subsidiary of Fisheries Development Oman, has been awarded the Certification for Wild Sustainable Fishing from the world renowned independent sustainability organisation, Friend of the Sea. This certificate aims to protect the oceans and involve sustainable practices in all aspects of its business to safeguard the integrity of aquatic life.

Al Wusta Fisheries Industries went through series of sustainability audits to achieve this accreditation from the Friend of the Sea for Certification for Wild Sustainable Fishing.

This accreditation ensures that Al Wusta operations follow the guidelines according to FAO,

Regional Fishery Bodies and National Fisheries Authorities which provide for the non-overexploitation of wild fisheries resources.

Other criteria include: no significant impact on the seabed, selective fishing gear (max 8 per cent discard), no bycatch listed as 'vulnerable' or worse in the IUCN Red list, waste and energy management and social accountability.

It is worth noting that Al Wusta Fish Industries was established as one of the initiatives of the national economic diversification programme Tanfeedh, which was established in line with the Oman Vision 2040, which seeks to increase the utilisation of Oman's abundant fish resources, creating jobs, building in-country capacity and training opportunities for the national workforce.

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HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTERS OATH TO NEW MINISTER

UN HAILS SUPPORT PEACE IN

MUSCAT: Before His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Dr Saad bin Hamood bin Alkhatib, Chairman of the Supreme Court Shuaib Al Mubtar, Head of Khadija al Basmali, and Chairman of Administrative Judiciary Court Shuaib Al Mubtar, Head of Khadija al Basmali, took the oath of office at Al Rasad Palace on Thursday. SEE ALSO P2

NEW RO 50 BANKNOTE FROM THIS MONTH

MUSCAT: To mark the 50th anniversary of the Omani Revolution and in commemoration of the secretary of the founder late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) issued a fifth series of new RO 50 banknotes, which will begin circulation this month. CBO will also issue new banknotes for all other denominations during the last quarter of 2020. YOM YOM P4

SOME PEOPLE NOT FOLLOWING SOCIAL DISTANCING NOWHS

MUSCAT: The frequent cases of coronavirus in Oman, which has led to the closure of schools and the suspension of many activities, has led to the need for social distancing. A drive around the downtown area and the surrounding areas reveals that many people are still not following the guidelines. While most people are wearing masks and maintaining social distancing, some are not. It is necessary to follow the guidelines of health authorities and keep the necessary social distancing during the last quarter of 2020. YOM YOM P4

STAY APART AND BREAK THE CHAIN

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SQU student invents wheelchair controlled by brain

Al Waddah al Battashi, an engineering student at Sultan Qaboos University, said that his smart wheelchair invention addresses issues of mobility for persons with disability including those with hemiplegia, paralysis, or loss of limbs by using electro-encephalography technology... **P20**



ESO's Namat Competition empowers local students to raise awareness on environment issues

DURING AN AWARD ceremony hosted in Muscat, the Environment Society of Oman (ESO) has announced eight winners of the Namat Competition 2021-22 and launched the third edition of the competition for 2022-23.

Held in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, and with sponsorship from Veolia Oman and Emily's Garden, the Namat Competition aims to encourage eco-friendly awareness within schools across the Sultanate and promote a conservation culture by tasking students to come up with sustainable ideas to overcome environ-

mental issues in the areas of energy, waste and water management. In its second year, the competition saw over 600 students, teachers, and parents take part, forming 67 teams representing government schools from across the Sultanate.

Today's event was hosted by ESO's President, HH Sayyidah Tania al Said, with the winners receiving their prizes from Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education; RO 1,000 for first place, RO 500 for second and RO 300 for third.



BEST SCHOOL IN WATER MANAGEMENT:

- 1st place- Al Qalaa School - Al Dakhiliyah Governorate
- 2nd place Al Fadhl bin Abbas School - South Al Batinah Governorate
- 3rd place - this place eliminated

BEST SCHOOL IN WASTE MANAGEMENT:

- 1st place- Lamees bint Amro Al Ansariyah School- North Al Sharqiyah Governorate
- 2nd place- Al Sinainah School - Al Buraimi Governorate
- 3rd place - Al Amal School - Muscat Governorate

BEST SCHOOL IN ENERGY MANAGEMENT:

- 1st place- Safiya Om Al Moamneen School - Al Dakhiliyah Governorate
- 2nd place - Omaia bint Qais School - North Al Batinah Governorate
- 3rd place - Qarn Al Alam School - Al Dakhiliyah Governorate

"The competition is a fun and engaging way for us to teach young Omanis about environmental issues, while encouraging them to apply this knowledge to tangible activities. The students have exceeded our expectations and have worked diligently, with great enthusiasm and a commendable positive spirit to implement their projects. Their incredible work deserves to be

recognised and so we are pleased to have been able to celebrate their successes during this ceremony," said Jawaher al Ghafri, Education Coordinator at ESO.

Ibrahim al Farsi, Activity Specialist, Ministry of Education said, "It is vitally important to do all we can to preserve the natural environment. Education is key in becoming environmentally aware and the quality and variety of submissions shows how attuned the next generation is to the challenges ahead. Congratulations to the winners and we look forward to even more innovative solutions next year."

Building on the success of the competition, ESO also announced the launch of the third edition of the Namat Competition for 2022-23, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and under the exclusive sponsorship of Veolia Oman, a leading global and regional resource management company.

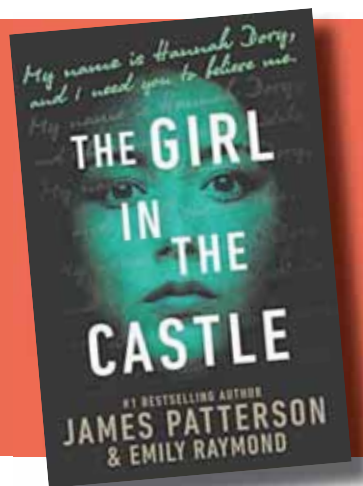
Erwan Rouxel, Chief Executive Officer from Veolia Oman commented, "As the country moves ahead with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, it is vital to consider our day-to-day impacts on the environment both now and in the future. As Veolia, the benchmark company for ecological transformation, I am pleased to witness the high level of awareness from participants. We are proud to partner with the Environment Society of Oman to support the education and commitment of Oman's youth on environmental issues and engage in instilling a proactive attitude to conservation which will serve as an example for the next generation to follow."

READ

THE GIRL IN THE CASTLE

BY JAMES PATTERSON AND EMILY RAYMOND

The lives of two girls named Hannah from different time periods and locations, mysteriously intertwine.



FASHION TREND

Models present creations by various designers from India's Punjab state during a fashion show organised by women wing of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) at a resort on the outskirts of Amritsar. — **AFP**



PARIS OPERA

French star dancer Hugo Marchand (L) and French star dancer Dorothee Gilbert pose during a photo session at the Opera Garnier in Paris. — **AFP**





Small island off Hong Kong offers haven from stress of living

SOMETHING CLICKED instantly for Zero Chan when she first set foot on the island of Peng Chau, a short ferry ride from Hong Kong's central business district, at a time when she was feeling burnt out and recovering from illness.

"When I take the ferry back, it's like a cleansing ritual," the former film producer said. "I can fall asleep, read or do my own thing on the ferry. I already feel recharged."

The island offers valuable middle ground for some like Chan, who seek to leave behind the stress accumulated from events such as pro-democracy protests in 2019, a national security crackdown that followed, and more recently, strict curbs against Covid-19.

These changes have reshaped life in the global financial hub, driving hun-



dreds of thousands to leave for Britain, Canada and Taiwan, but Chan has stayed on.

"At a time when many say Hong Kong is no longer the same as before, the more I feel a need to stay, to see what I can do," said Chan, who runs a yoga and meditation studio in her home on the island, following that first visit in 2020.

(To see photo essay, please click on <https://reut.rs/3MyHfAB>)

Her customers are a sprinkling of housewives, office workers and retired people. Each morning, she eats breakfast and drinks tea at a white cast-iron table facing the sea, collecting her thoughts for the day.

"People need space, but there's so much noise in the city," added the 36-year-old devotee of Buddhism and Zen. "I'm very happy now."

Some experts say a growing trend of alternative communities can be linked to protest episodes in 2014 and 2019 that rallied against China's tightening grip on the former British colony.

"These social events are important catalysts," said Ng Mee-kam, a professor of urban studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

"In the face of all these changes, all these tensions and all these conflicts, I think it's inevitable that people of all generations have to reflect on what's going on, and what life means."

Newcomers drawn by an idyllic lifestyle and low rents in one of the world's priciest property markets are rejuvenating Peng Chau, reversing an exodus in the 1970s as fortunes waned in the area, once home to Hong Kong's biggest matchstick factory.

Many dilapidated village homes have been renovated, and deserted concrete husks such as the Fook Yuen leather factory have been converted into a "secret garden" art space featuring graffiti and installation works.

Cafes, boutiques and an independent bookshop have sprouted beside traditional Chinese temples, family-run shops and diners.

"My woodwork teacher recently came to visit me," said Jesse Yu, who moved to the island to pursue the dream of being a carpenter.

"He was quite amazed and asked me



whether we young people can really survive on dreams," added Yu, whose workshop, tucked behind a bed in his studio flat, is about 100 sq. ft (9.3 sq m), or just big enough for two people to stand in.

"My dream is just a wall away from me," added Yu, who works freelance in corporate communications and sometimes goes kayaking with Chan, a good friend.

"I enjoy doing woodwork because of the freedom."

Yet, despite a growing trend of seeking out quieter lifestyles on islands as well as villages in the rural New Territories, such spaces are threatened by big new development projects, said Ng, the academic.

"The frontiers for the younger generation to have the space to explore these alternative lifestyles is diminishing, so I think we, as a society, need to be very careful," he added.

Taki Chan, a college lecturer who moved to the island this year, prizes its close-knit sense of community.

She rapidly became friends with a group of women met during a walk, after the experience cheered her up sufficiently to join them in a swim, despite feeling unwell.

"After moving to Peng Chau, I realised I don't need to emigrate anymore," Chan said.

"There are many resources here to help rejuvenate you, its people, its natural and quiet environment." — Reuters

logical care. Children make up about half of Gaza's 2.3 million Palestinian population.

"We get afraid, we stay at home, and we fear the noises, from the drones and wars," said 11-year-old Jana Al-Shafe.

"Our mental health changed with breakdance. We get entertained when we come here and play with our friends and change our mood," she said.

Breakdancing, generally believed to have emerged among Black and Latino dancers in New York in the 1970s, became a worldwide phenomenon with the rise of hip-hop culture. The acrobatic dance style will be included for the first time as a sport in the 2024 Olympics in Paris. — Reuters

CHANGING WORLD

Gaza children breakdance to kick stress away



ON A STREET IN THE Nusseirat refugee camp, in the central Gaza Strip, teenagers perform breakdancing moves once condemned by some locals as immoral and now seen as a way of helping youngsters handle years of war and trauma.

The moves - with names like top rock and down rock — are part of a training programme by Gaza coach Ahmed Al-Ghraiz, who says he uses dance as therapy to help children kick away fears and release tension.

Ghraiz, 32, who has a certificate in post-trauma studies, spent seven years in Europe, where he and some friends put on breakdancing shows that he said advocated for the Palestinian cause, in particular of Gaza.

In the beginning, people in the camp rejected the hip-hop dance style, until Ghraiz showed how it could bring out some of the day-to-day problems experi-



enced by their children and help them process their experiences.

"Some children come to me and say they are tired, they look withered, which means they neither rest enough nor have a deep sleep. I found that some used to cut themselves, and others avoid social activities," Ghraiz said.

"Such sport and such moves create psychological stability," he said.

Dance is used around the world as a therapeutic practice alongside traditional counselling and other rehabilitation efforts aiming to ease anxiety, depression, anger and post-traumatic stress.

In 2022, Unicef, the United Nations Children's Fund said nearly 500,000 children in Gaza needed psycho-



logical care. Children make up about half of Gaza's 2.3 million Palestinian population.

"We get afraid, we stay at home, and we fear the noises, from the drones and wars," said 11-year-old Jana Al-Shafe.

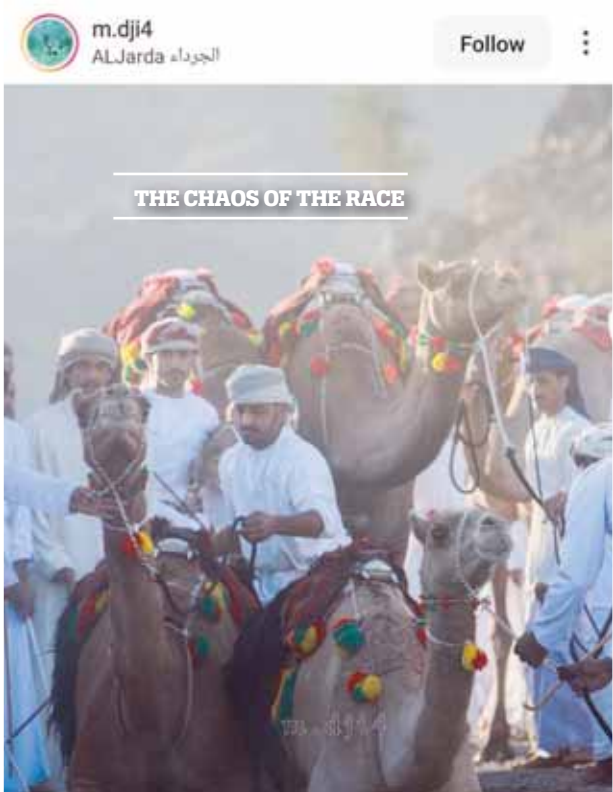
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AROUND THE WORLD

ENTERTAINMENT

Mattel celebrates Tina Turner with Barbie creation



TOY COMPANY MATTEL is honouring Tina Turner on the 40th anniversary of her hit song "What's Love Got To Do With It" with a Barbie doll created in her likeness.

The doll, which is part of their Barbie Signature Music Series, is wearing an outfit inspired by the music video for the song – a black mini dress paired with a denim jacket and her signature hairstyle.

"I am honoured to welcome my Barbie into the group of trailblazing women already repre-



sented and introduce more kids to my journey," Turner, 82, said in a statement.

The eight-time Grammy winner enjoyed huge success in the late 1960s and early 1970s performing with her former husband, Ike Turner, but the couple divorced in 1978 after a stormy marriage.

In early November 2019, Turner attended the opening night of The Tina Turner Musical on Broadway, which chronicles her life and work.

She retired from performing after her last tour, which ended in 2009.

Turner, who was born in Tennessee, moved to Switzerland in 1995 to join her German-born record producer partner Erwin Bach, who she later married in 2013, and became a citizen in April of that year. The doll is available for purchase on MattelCreations.com and through Amazon, Walmart and Target. — Reuters

TRAVEL TALES

Mountainous Lesotho finds gold in trout fish farming



IT'S HARVEST TIME in Lejone, a small village nestled in mountains in southern Africa more than two thousand metres above sea level.

The yield is not grain or fruit, but rainbow trout the bounty from an undulating river at the foot of the peaks of Lesotho.

Fishermen haul nets bulging with trout onto a floating platform.

The fish are killed and put on ice, the first step on their journey to dinner tables in neighbouring South Africa.

The settlement is home to one of Lesotho's two professional fish farms pioneering ventures in the poor landlocked kingdom.

Stephen Phakisi, 59, launched Katse Fish Farms with two partners in 2005.

Today, he chuckles at how the trio leapt into the business with meagre knowledge about some of its unknowns, including the best feed for fattening fish quickly.

"For five years, it was totally uneconomical," Phakisi says.

He recalls how he once found a shoal of fish dead and belly-up in the water, while another time a full cargo of imported fingerlings died on a 16-hour drive from Cape Town.

Today, the company is profitable, with a yearly output of 800 tonnes of fish, which is sold at about \$4 a kilogramme.

It supplies a few local restaurants, where the trout is usually pan-fried in butter for a few minutes and served with a side dish of kale and potato chips or rice.

But the bulk of its production lands on the shelves of high-end supermarkets in neighbouring South Africa, where a vacuum-packed one-kilo bag can cost up to \$50.

- 'HEADS AND BONES' -

Trout farming in Lesotho has grown on the back of another of the mountain country's most famous exports: water.

South Africa gets much of its water from its neighbour, which



has dammed several of its waterways over the past three decades.

The dams have widened riverbeds, creating inlets and basins that are ideal for trout farming.

Katse Fish Farms lies more than 2,000 metres (6,500 feet) above sea level on the Malibamatso River, upstream from the giant Katse Dam reservoir that supplies South Africa's capital Pretoria and the largest city, Johannesburg.

Fish farming currently accounts for less than 0.1 per cent of Lesotho's \$2 billion GDP.

Locals say they have always eaten salted, sun-dried freshwater fish. And young boys sell fresh catch to passing motorists.

But as dam construction continues, the country has the potential "to become the regional leader in aquaculture," according to the Lesotho National Development Corporation.

In this country of just over two million people, who rank among the poorest in the world, few seem to be benefiting so far from

the water boom.

"We are selling water to South Africa but we have no water to our homes," says Joshua Sefali, a village leader in Lejone.

Many of the village's stone houses with thatched roofs have no mains water or electricity.

Large swathes of land were flooded after dams went up.

Some people lost their homes and access to farmland, receiving only small compensation in return.

Machaka Khalala, 31, said she received about \$165 when the field where she used to grow corn and spinach was submerged.

Now she makes a living selling "fat cakes," a local doughnut.

But that's often not enough to make ends meet.

A cap on her head, Khalala was among dozens of people queuing up in the cold, a bucket in hand, on a mountain roadside.

Here, Lesotho's other fish farm hands out leftovers every week "the heads and backbones," Khalala said. — AFP



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

Pursue happiness, success will follow

WITHOUT GOING away from people's lives and their true reality, we all realise that every person desires two things from their jobs and professions: to be successful in their work and to find happiness afterwards.

In other words, everyone would like to enjoy their work as much as possible and become happier as a person as a result. These are undoubtedly reasonable goals, but there can be a lot of questions to ask! Lots of people, especially hard-working people, simplify it logically: they first seek success and then assume that success will lead to happiness... isn't it?

I now see that this logic is wrong. The pursuit of success – if I may say so – has costs that can ultimately reduce happiness, as we've heard from some lonely, persistent workaholics.

Of course, this does not mean that you have to choose between success and happiness. You can have both. But I think you have to reverse the order of operations: Instead of trying to achieve success first and hoping that it will lead to happiness, start working on your happiness, which will enhance your success.

Perhaps many people generally enjoy the money and prestige that relative success has produced. However, success did not lead to complete satisfaction: it indirectly led to less satisfaction with life, most likely through time constraints, stress and poor social relations!

Hence, although success and happiness are linked, that chemistry is

mostly one-way, not in the way most people think. So working on your success to become happier is ineffective at best and may explode in your face and lead to unhappiness. But working on your happiness gives you the best chance of having both!

It is true that even if everything I have mentioned makes sense to you, you may still find yourself falling into old habits of searching for happiness through worldly success at work. It is as if I imagine the story of that starving artist, where that man starves himself in a cage for a living like his work in a travelling carnival and he is obsessed with his work and as a perfectionist, he strives for what I might call – an impeccable fast – and the hunger artist is proud of his success, despite it is always gloomy!! Where is the desired happiness after all the trouble?

After time passes while he is in this state, the act of the hunger artist becomes out of the public interest. In a desperate attempt to revive his faltering career, he is trying to fast more than ever. However, he is completely ignored by people, sitting alone in his cage. Eventually, the hunger artist will starve himself to death!

In the end, we may have a little bit of that hunger artist in us, but honestly, you won't find happiness by giving up happiness, so don't starve yourself. But inevitably, your chances of success will increase if you eat!

Dr Yousuf Ali Al Mulla is a physician, medical innovator and writer.

art & life

Local Scene

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THURSDAY | OCTOBER 20 | 2022



SQU student invents wheelchair controlled by brain

By Buthaina al Riyami

While technology has grown immensely over the last decade, for people with disabilities, particularly those who are wheelchair-bound, there are still a lot of challenges that remain unaddressed.

While some wheelchairs can be operated by hand giving some PWD a little bit of independence when it comes to mobility, individuals like those with hemiplegia, paralysis, or loss of limbs still have to rely on someone to move their wheelchairs around.

Al Waddah al Battashi, an engineering student at Sultan Qaboos University, said that his smart wheelchair invention addresses this issue and that while some may consider this a minor discovery, he said this fills up a gap in the market for PWDs.

"This new wheelchair can be used by a wider group and address the needs of people with mobility disabilities. It can be used by individuals with hemiplegia, paralysis, or loss of limbs," Al Battashi explained.

He added, "These people cannot use electric wheelchairs that are normally controlled by hand. I've devised this wheelchair to use EEG technology and was built upon the success of a colleague's invention three years ago when he created an electric wheelchair that is controlled by eye movements," he shared.

Al Battashi specialises in

Mechatronics engineering. His invention was inspired not just by modern developments in the area of electroencephalography technology (EEG technology) but by his peers with who said he has interacted at the university.

"I am studying at Sultan Qaboos University where I have a chance to interact with my peers who are with special needs. It opened my eyes to have a better understanding of their needs," he said.

Al Battashi said it is a basic instinct for any human to grow independent whether in their character or movements. His interaction with his peers has inspired him and made him understand that even they too wanted to have more independence in what they can do and where they can go.

His research will eventually lead to the creation of a wheelchair controlled by the mind, using a computer-brain interface, and electroencephalography technology.

Electroencephalography or EEG is an electrophysiological procedure used to record electrical activity by using electrodes applied to the scalp. Electrodes measure voltage changes that are caused by the ionic current in the brain's neurons. Electrodes' sensors detect brain waves and record them; then, amplify them and send them digitally to a device or a cloud database.

Al Battashi said the wheelchair will address an important gap in the market. He explained that the wheelchair

contains a wireless headset whose sensors detect and record brainwaves and then send them as electroencephalography to the wheelchair's database. Finally, the brainwaves are translated into commands and transmitted to the wheelchair to respond according to the received commands.

Al Battashi's aspirations for his project are to be tested and experimented with larger groups to verify the effectiveness of EEG technology in his project. Also, he looks forward to developing the headset to make it easier for daily use. He also hopes to be able to turn the headset into a cap, turban, or hijab. Hence, it became part of casual clothing and adapted to the Arabic culture.

He also looks forward to developing a headset with an open-source system to simplify the process of developing the wheelchairs and is even looking forward to applying the same technology to control prosthetics.

Finally, he suggested using this technology in a plethora of applications and fields. He clarified that there are many cases of uses for this technology, and by applying this technology, people will make huge leaps in the field of scientific invention. This technique can be applied to neuromarketing research for more accurate results. Also, it can be used in smart city applications and driving cars with minds. Many other uses and applications are waiting for great minds to show them to the real world.

